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January 29, 2001

TO: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
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            Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke
            Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
            Supervisor Don Knabe

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley
            Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **MANAGEMENT AUDIT OF THE REGISTRAR-RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK'S VOTER INFORMATION AND ABSENTEE BALLOT PROCESSING**

Attached is the report on the second phase of the management audit of the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC). The audit was performed by Strategica under contract with the Auditor-Controller's Office.

The Board of Supervisors requested the scope of the management audit be amended to include a review of the RR/CC's absentee ballot report processing procedures, the RR/CC's procedures for printing and mailing sample ballots, and an assessment of the RR/CC's technological ability to update and respond to issues and problems associated with the voter file. Strategica performed these additional procedures and prepared a report with its findings and recommendations.

Summary of Findings

The auditor's overall assessment is that the RR/CC has successfully managed to process their workload of election transactions according to the statutory deadlines despite a two-day work action and a record number of ballots cast during the November 2000 General Election. The RR/CC has implemented new technology in recent years, such as the use of bar codes for voter ID numbers, high speed sorting of absentee voter ballot envelopes, and digital imaging of voter affidavits and signatures to enhance the productivity of processing election transactions. In addition, the RR/CC has the staffing and technology in place to ensure that registration affidavits arriving by the statutory

deadline are processed in time for inclusion on either the regular or supplemental precinct voter rosters.

The RR/CC also has processes and procedures in place to address registration problems such as voter names not appearing on the roster. In addition, the RR/CC and the U. S. Postal Service (USPS) have developed troubleshooting procedures to ensure that any delivery problems are handled in a preplanned, consistent manner.

The report indicates that additional improvements can be made, such as implementation of Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR) technology; exploring the feasibility of using a mailing house for the initial absentee voter ballot mailing; establishing the use of monitors to spot-check USPS facilities during election season; and investigating the use of electronic signature verification technology to expedite the signature validation process associated with absentee ballots. The report includes recommendations in each of these areas.

The Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk's Department agrees with the findings and recommendations contained in the report and intends to provide a detailed response and action plan for each of the recommendations in March 2001.

Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Patrick McMahon at (213) 974-0301.

JTM:PTM:IDC

Attachment

c: Conny B. McCormack, Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk
    David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
    Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer
    Public Information Officer
    Audit Committee

Election Transactions Review

January 18, 2001

Presented to J. Tyler McCauley
Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller

Prepared by:

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Executive Summary

Project Scope

This project was requested by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to address concerns about the accuracy and efficiency of processing time-sensitive election transactions. The Board was particularly concerned about procedures used for handling absentee ballots, sample ballots, voter registration affidavits; monitoring workloads and providing adequate staffing; and quality control procedures used by the U.S. Post Office (USPS).

Methods Used

During the project, the consultant performed the following procedures:

❑ Interviewed Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) managers and supervisors regarding staff productivity measures, staffing plans, coordinating with political campaigns and coordination with the USPS;

❑ Interviewed USPS personnel regarding processes for handling Absentee Voter (AV) requests, AV ballots, Quality Control (QC) procedures (including procedures for handling undelivered ballots) and delivery of returned ballots;

❑ Observed processes for production and mailing of sample ballots;

❑ Observed processes for handling AV requests including picking ballots, staging ballots, preparing envelopes, stuffing envelopes and mailing;

❑ Observed USPS processes for handling election materials;

❑ Observed processes used for AV requests from non-sample ballot sources;

❑ Observed process for handling last-minute registrations and address changes;

❑ Observed processing of returned absentee ballots;

❑ Evaluated the effectiveness of AV-by-Precinct counting procedures; and

❑ Prepared this report.

Overall Assessment

Despite a two-day work action and a record number of ballots cast during the November 2000 General Election, the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) managed to process their workload of election transactions according to the statutory deadlines. Furthermore, due to better quality assurance monitoring on the part of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) and the RR/CC, virtually all election materials reached their destination in a timely manner.

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New technology has been implemented in recent years that enhances the productivity of processing election transactions:

❑ Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR) for automating data entry of voter registration affidavits;

❑ High-speed sorting of absentee voter (AV) ballot envelopes and digital imaging of voter affidavits and voter signatures that facilitates the authentication of AV ballots; and

❑ Use of bar codes for voter ID numbers that further expedite the processing of AV request fulfillment and sorting of voted ballots.

The RR/CC and the USPS have developed troubleshooting procedures to ensure that any delivery problems are handled in a preplanned, consistent manner. The RR/CC also has quality control procedures in place for addressing missing ballots, spoiled ballots and registration issues which may impact a voter's ability to vote on election day.

Election Operations Staffing and Workload Monitoring

The RR/CC has developed productivity measures for handling key election transactions such as registration affidavits and absentee ballot requests. These measures are used for forecasting the need for temporary staffing during the election season. During the November 2000 election season, despite a two-day work action, the RR/CC had adequate staffing to ensure that all election transactions were processed in accordance with legal deadlines.

Registering Voters

The RR/CC is implementing an ICR-based system for expediting the registering of new voters. This new system, when fully implemented, will significantly increase productivity in this key process. During the November 2000 election season, the RR/CC had sufficient staffing and technology in place to ensure that registration affidavits arriving by the statutory deadline were processed in time for inclusion on either the regular or supplemental precinct voter rosters. The RR/CC also has processes and procedures in place to address registration problems such as voter names not appearing on the roster.

Mailing Sample Ballots

The RR/CC contracts with a printing company and a mail processing company for handling sample ballots. These firms have implemented procedures for ensuring that all sample ballots are printed, sorted and mailed prior to the statutory deadline. These firms also use a delivery procedure that reduces postage costs while speeding up delivery of sample ballots by one or two days. Quality control procedures are in place to ensure that voters receive the correct sample ballot and that additional ballots can be sent in the event of lost or mis-delivered sample ballots.

Processing Absentee Ballot Requests and Absentee Ballots

The RR/CC has implemented bar code technology to expedite the fulfillment of absentee ballot requests. Bar codes allow the efficient production of envelopes and staging of ballots

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and other materials. The RR/CC has also implemented quality control procedures to ensure that voters receive the correct ballot. These procedures require that a high percentage of AV ballot envelopes (we estimate 25% of all runs) must be opened up after stuffing and sealing and double-checked. This double-checking slows down processing and requires additional staff but does provide a high degree of assurance. Given the importance of providing all registered voters with the ability to cast ballots, this extraordinary due diligence is appropriate.

Workers, most of whom are temporary, are given basic instructions on how to handle election transactions when they start work. Most of this processing involves simple, rote tasks that do not require a more complicated training regimen.

The RR/CC works with campaigns to achieve consistency in the format of AV ballot application forms and to communicate timing requirements, but does not follow up to ensure that applications are received by the legal deadline. Given the number of campaigns, this type of follow-up would be impractical.

The RR/CC staged a meeting of key USPS and elections vendors to improve the consistency of transaction processing and troubleshooting and to set expectations for the election season.

The USPS implemented additional quality control measures at their large sorting plant on Central Avenue to avoid a repeat of the problems experienced during the March 2000 Primary Election. These measures include diligently making log entries to record the movement of election mail in the sorting plant; handling RR/CC election mail on one shift to avoid handoffs; and isolating RR/CC election mail from the regular flow of business bulk mail. Furthermore, the RR/CC opted to use first-class postage on all AV ballots to ensure more expeditious delivery (at an additional cost of $200,000.)

We are concerned that the other USPS sorting plants (there are seven large plants in the Los Angeles region) are not as diligent in controlling the movement and expediting the process of RR/CC election mail as the Central Avenue plant. Fortunately, no major delivery issues arose during the November 2000 election season.

Processing Returned Absentee Ballots

The validation of voter signatures affixed to absentee ballot return envelopes is the most tedious and time-consuming election transaction. The RR/CC has implemented scanning and sorting technology which significantly increases the productivity of absentee ballot voter signature validation. Given the ever-increasing popularity of absentee voting, the investment in technology and process improvements is appropriate. The RR/CC is looking into additional productivity-improving technology such as automated signature verification.

In response to changes in State election laws, the RR/CC has implemented a new method for coding absentee ballots by ballot type and precinct number. This new coding method requires a more tedious and meticulous process on the frontend for preparing absentee ballots, but also results in a much better paper trail backing up election results. We feel that the RR/CC made the correct decision in selecting this process and method of counting.

The RR/CC also has a fair and accurate process for handling spoiled and damaged ballots so long as the voters intent can be discerned.   Finally, the RR/CC has an appropriate procedure for picking up absentee ballots at the USPS main sorting plant on election eve.

Recommendations

We have made four recommendations for further enhancing the processing of election transactions in the future:

Recommendation 1 – Complete the testing, modification and rollout of the ICR function for registering new voters

Given the potential productivity improvement, the RR/CC should complete testing and modifying the Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR) feature for registering new voters and roll out the system into full production.

Recommendation 2 – Explore the feasibility of using the sample ballot mailing house for the initial AV ballot mailing; use first-class postage for subsequent AV ballot mailings

The RR/CC should explore the feasibility of using their sample ballot mailing house, Diversified Direct, for sorting and delivering the initial run of AV ballots (generated for permanent absentee voters). Diversified Direct delivers most sample ballots directly to local post offices (called Direct Delivery Units or DDUs) bypassing the large USPS sorting plants and shaving off a day or two in delivery time. By using Diversified Direct, RR/CC could use third-class postage for the AV ballots and expect expedited delivery at a lower cost.

Subsequent shipments of AV ballots should continue to be sent using first-class postage and handled by the Central Avenue plant.

Recommendation 3 – Use monitors and spot-checking at USPS facilities

Although the USPS implemented tighter quality control procedures at the Central Avenue SCF[1] during the November 2000 election period, procedures at other SCFs may not be as secure. In addition, should quality control measures at the SCFs lapse, the RR/CC is not in a position to know until delivery problems arise and requested materials do not arrive at voters' residences. To alleviate these risks, the RR/CC should assign a small staff of monitors (e.g., two or three individuals) to perform spot checks of USPS facilities during major elections. These staffpeople should conduct scheduled and unannounced visits at the seven SCFs during the election season.

Recommendation 4 – Implement process changes to facilitate more efficient, large scale absentee voting

To mitigate the high processing costs of handling AV ballots, the RR/CC should pilot the use of electronic signature verification, an automated process where signatures are compared

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[1] An SCF or Sectional Center is a large mail sorting plant that handles bulk business mail and political mail. There are seven SCFs in the Los Angeles region.

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and validated with no human intervention.[2] Electronic signature verification would greatly expedite the tedious, time-consuming job of signature validation associated with absentee ballots.   Electronic signature verification requires an extensive database of intelligible, imaged voter signatures.   As new signatures are obtained from voters (either through registration updates, absentee ballot requests and absentee ballot return envelopes), they would either augment or replace older, less intelligible signatures already imaged and on file.   Over time, the database of imaged signatures would improve in quality making electronic signature verification more effective.
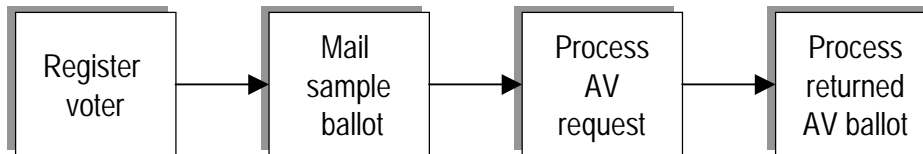
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[2] Although electronic signature verification has been applied successfully in banking applications its use in elections has not been attempted at this time.

Overall Election Transaction Process

The processing of election transactions can be illustrated with a simple process map as shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1 – Overall Elections Transaction Process

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┌──────────┐     ┌──────────┐     ┌──────────┐     ┌──────────┐
│ Register │ ──▶ │   Mail   │ ──▶ │ Process  │ ──▶ │ Process  │
│  voter   │     │  sample  │     │   AV     │     │ returned │
│          │     │  ballot  │     │ request  │     │ AV ballot│
└──────────┘     └──────────┘     └──────────┘     └──────────┘
```

Registering voters – Residents of Los Angeles County register to vote by completing a Voter Registration Affidavit. This affidavit is processed by RR/CC staff to ensure that the voter is eligible to vote. Affidavits are also submitted by current voters to effect address changes or changes in party affiliation. A voter notification card is sent to new voters or voters who have re-registered.

Mail sample ballot – The RR/CC mails a sample ballot booklet to each eligible voter a few weeks prior to election day. The sample ballot booklets are unique to the candidates and measures contested in each area of the County.

Process absentee ballot (AV) request – Any voter is eligible to vote absentee. Applications for absentee voting are on the back cover of the sample ballot booklet. Also, a significant number of voters apply for absentee ballots after receiving an application from political campaigns and parties or by sending a personal letter.

Process returned AV ballot – Voters can complete and return absentee ballots up until election day.[3] The ballots are then processed by the RR/CC and included in the official vote tally.

This report is organized according to this overall process. A separate section covers the specific procedures and issues for each step in the overall election transaction process. An additional section covers election operations staffing and workload monitoring.

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[3] Absentee ballots must arrive at the Central Avenue post office facility by the close of the polls at 8:00 p.m. or they can be submitted to a polling location. The RR/CC sends a truck to the Central Avenue facility at 8:00 p.m. to collect absentee ballots.

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Election Operations Staffing and Workload Monitoring

Questions to be Answered

Specific questions posed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors include:

❑ Determine if productivity measures have been established for absentee ballot processing, and whether staffing is adequate given legal deadlines.

Findings

Use of workload monitoring and productivity measures

The RR/CC prepares daily reports on election transaction workflow. These reports (samples can be found in the Appendix) include:

❑ Absent Voting Status Report. This report shows the cumulative number of requests received or updated, AV ballots mailed or returned and the number of snags related to AV ballot returns (e.g., no voter signature, spoiled ballot, etc.). The report also shows the number of requests, returned ballots and ballot snags waiting to be processed.

❑ Absent Voter Progress Report. This report shows the daily cumulative totals of AV ballot requests received and fulfilled and the number of AV ballot returns received.

❑ Workload and Personnel Status for Data Entry Report. This report shows the daily status of election transaction processing. The report shows the number of transactions completed and outstanding and the number of personnel assigned to each transaction type for:

- Voter registration affidavits

- Voter notification cards

- AV ballot applications

- AV ballots

- Petition signatures

This report allows the Data Entry Unit Section Head and the Voter Records Division Manager to monitor workflows and shift staff as backlogs arise.

The RR/CC uses three workload benchmarks to determine the election season staffing necessary for processing election transactions:

1. Voter registration affidavits – 100 affidavits processed per day for new staff

2. Voter registration affidavits – 150 affidavits processed per day for experienced staff

3. AV ballot requests – 70 requests per hour

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Although these benchmarks are useful for estimating staffing needs, the RR/CC is considering hiring a consultant to perform a workload study to establish more precise benchmarks.

Staffing and work action issues

Based on the workload benchmarks, 165 temporary employees were hired to process election transactions. These employees staffed a day and swing shift so that productivity levels could be maintained without resorting to excessive overtime.

During the first few days of the November 2000 election season, Local 660 of the Service Employees International Union, the union representing most Los Angeles County clerical workers, went on strike for two days. This could have been extremely detrimental to the ability of the RR/CC to process election transactions in accordance with deadlines. The RR/CC had prepared a "Work Action Contingency Plan" in September 2000 to anticipate the staffing issues that would arise due to a strike. This plan called for accelerated hiring of temporary staff into a larger than necessary pool of workers to compensate for disruptions. In addition, non-represented employees from other County agencies were reassigned temporarily to the RR/CC to process election transactions. The consultants visited the data entry work areas during the strike and found that all workstations were staffed and processing election transactions. Several represented supervisors and section heads had observed the work action and left their jobs reducing the level of supervision for these temporary workers.

Despite the record turnout and demand for absentee ballots and the work action, the RR/CC managed to process all election transactions according to the statutory deadlines.

Conclusions

The RR/CC has developed productivity measures for handling key election transactions such as registration affidavits and absentee ballot requests. These measures are used for forecasting the need for temporary staffing during the election season. During the November 2000 election season, despite a two-day work action, the RR/CC had adequate staffing to ensure that all election transactions were processed in accordance with legal deadlines.

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## Registering Voters

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Questions to be Answered

Specific questions posed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors include:

❑ Assess the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk's technological ability to update in a timely manner the County's voter file after the close of registration and its capability to respond to issues and problems associated with the voter file brought to the attention of the Department by the public.

Subprocess

The process for registering votes is depicted in Figure 2:

Figure 2 – Voter Registration Process
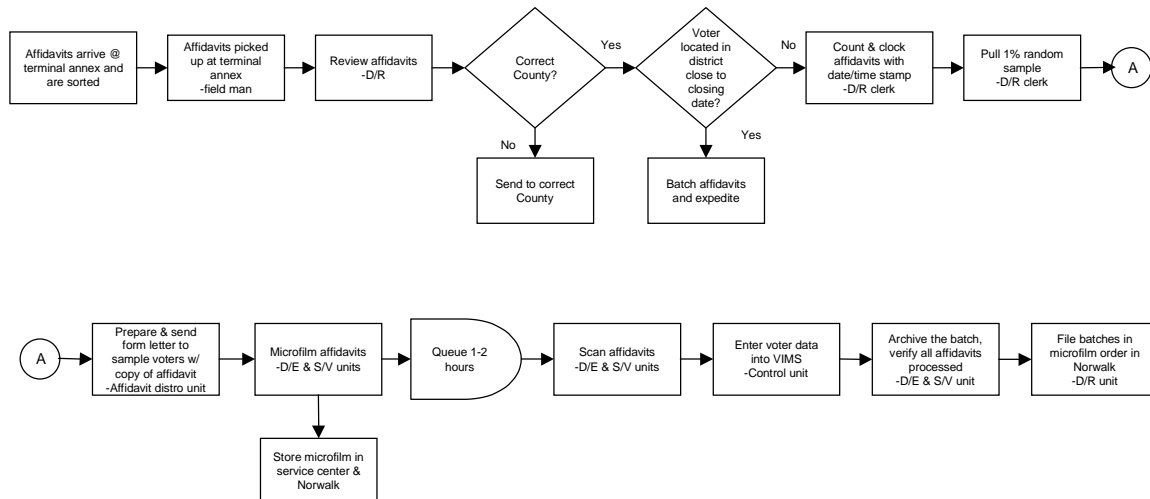
Findings

Technology used in voter maintenance

The RR/CC has been testing a new system for maintaining voter registration records that uses Intelligent Character Recognition or ICR. ICR involves scanning incoming voter registration affidavits and creating a digital image of the form. Selected areas of the image are then examined by the ICR software and the handwritten information is converted to machine-readable data. This data is then examined by an operator who ensures that the ICR software correctly interpreted the handwritten information and makes corrections as needed. This system has the potential to increase productivity in voter maintenance because much of the data entry is automated. Thus far the RR/CC has been testing the system and making modifications prior to putting the system into full production. The ICR

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software has been realizing accuracy rates of up to 78%. The RR/CC is planning on completing the implementation during the next few months.

Cutoffs for registration

The registration cutoff for the November 2000 General Election was October 10. At that time all affidavits on-hand were processed and the voter registration database was updated. The RR/CC was able to process all of these on-hand affidavits in a timely manner. Affidavits arriving after the cutoff date were processed after the election; those voters will be eligible to vote in subsequent elections. The procedures in place for processing affidavits up to the legal deadline for the November 2000 election were effective and in compliance with State law. As of January 1, 2001, a new State law, AB 1094, went into effect moving the deadline for registration from 29 days prior to election day to 15 days. This new deadline makes it much more difficult to complete the registration, mailing of sample ballot booklets and preparation of absentee ballots prior to the election.

Voter registration issues

The RR/CC has safeguards and procedures in place to ensure that registered voters are not disenfranchised due to recordkeeping errors in the voter registration database. After information on a newly registered voter is entered into the Voter Information Management System (VIMS), the voter is notified by postcard of their registration status. If the voter notices any discrepancies they can contact the agency and report any corrections. If a voter believes that he or she has registered yet is not listed on the polling place roster on election day the voter is allowed to vote using a provisional ballot. These provisional ballots are then checked to make sure the voter is registered. Often the voter simply went to the incorrect precinct; in this case the vote is eventually counted. In many cases, the voter is not registered; in this case the vote is not counted and the voter is sent a voter registration card to facilitate their registration for future elections. These procedures are appropriate for ensuring that all eligible voters are provided an opportunity to vote even if they are not listed on a precinct roster on election day.

Conclusions

The RR/CC has the staffing and technology in place to ensure that registration affidavits arriving by the statutory deadline are processed in time for inclusion on either the regular or supplemental precinct voter rosters. The RR/CC also has processes and procedures in place to address registration problems such as voter names not appearing on the roster.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Complete the testing, modification and rollout of the ICR function for registering new voters

Given the potential productivity improvement, the RR/CC should complete testing and modifying the Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR) feature for registering new voters and roll out the system into full production.

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Mailing Sample Ballots

Questions to be Answered

Specific questions posed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors include:

❑ Evaluate the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk's procedure for printing and mailing sample ballots to ensure they are handled efficiently and delivered within legal deadlines.

Findings

Use of mailing house

The RR/CC contracts with a company called Merrill Corporation to print and send sample ballots. Merrill then subcontracts with a Fullerton-based company called Diversified Direct to deliver the printed sample ballots to post offices. Diversified Direct has been handling RR/CC sample ballots for several years.

Diversified Direct handles sample ballots in two stages:

1. The initial large mailing of sample ballots associated with voters registered as of September 28, 2000: the first legal date to mail sample ballots. This initial mailing will total approximately 3.9 million pieces. These ballots are staged and delivered during the first few days of October.

2. After this initial large mailing, subsequent mailings are processed on a daily basis for new voters registering up to the October 10 deadline. Diversified conducted these supplemental mailings up to the legal deadline for mailing sample ballots, October 17.

Diversified Direct prints addresses on the sample ballots using a computer-controlled machine. Addresses are printed based on a computerized address list. These addresses are sorted based on:

1. Page count of the sample ballot

2. Direct Delivery Unit or DDU number (i.e., a DDU is a local post office)

3. Section Center or SCF number (i.e., the USPS operates seven SCFs around the region. SCFs are large sorting plants that break mail into DDU delivery order with each SCF overseeing several DDUs.)

4. Voter street address

5. Ballot type

Page counts vary depending on the number of political offices and measures contested in each area. Sorting by page count allows Diversified Direct to prepare large shipments of similar sized pieces, thereby expediting the postage calculations at the Postal Service.

Diversified Direct consolidates shipments of sample ballots based on the number of pieces bound for a particular DDU. If a shipment bound for a specific DDU is more than 5,000

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pieces, the shipment is sent directly to the DDU. For DDU shipments less than 5,000 pieces, the shipments are consolidated for shipment to one of the seven SCFs. From the SCFs, these smaller shipments are broken out and delivered to the DDUs by the USPS. By delivering the sample ballots directly to the DDUs, Diversified Direct realizes a lower postage cost per piece and shaves off one or two days in delivery time. For the smaller shipments, however, the economics do not favor shipping pieces directly to the DDU; they are therefore shipped to the SCFs for further processing.

Quality control procedures used

The RR/CC posts a quality control checker at the Diversified Direct plant in Fullerton. This RR/CC employee monitors the printing and staging of sample ballot shipments. The employee typically pulls five to ten sample ballots from each tray of addressed sample ballots (prior to staging and shipping) and scans the voter ID number which is printed on the sample ballot with a bar code reader. The scanner pulls up the voter address and ballot type number from a database and displays the information on a screen. This data is compared to the address and ballot group number printed on the sample ballot. The employee also visually inspects addresses as they are printed on the sample ballots for legibility.

Historically, the preparation and delivery of sample ballots has been trouble free. Since the sample ballots are not as controlled as absentee ballots it is a relatively easy process to send out sample ballots to voters who request additional copies or who do not receive the sample ballot due to a move or delivery problem. In addition, all sample ballots are now available on the Internet at the RR/CC Web site.

Conclusions

The RR/CC contracts with a printing company and a mail-processing company for handling sample ballots. These firms have implemented procedures for ensuring that all sample ballots are printed, sorted and mailed prior to the statutory deadline. These firms also use a delivery procedure that reduces postage costs while speeding up delivery of sample ballots by one or two days. Quality control procedures are in place to ensure that voters receive the correct sample ballot and that additional ballots can be sent in the event of lost or mis-delivered sample ballots.

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## Processing Absentee Ballot Requests and Absentee Ballots

Questions to be Answered

Specific questions posed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors include:

❑ Evaluate the Department's procedures for processing absentee ballot requests, and whether staff is given adequate instructions and training for this work;

❑ Assess the use of bar-coding and other technology to speed up entry of requests for absentee ballots into computer systems;

❑ Review how absentee ballot packages are prepared and what monitoring processes are provided to ensure that absentee voters receive the proper ballot;

❑ Determine if high-speed printers designed specifically for envelopes or other technology are used to expedite the process;

❑ Assess the sources and timing of absentee ballot requests (i.e., sample ballot applications, applications in campaign literature, private letter, etc.), and evaluate the Department's efforts to work with campaigns so that absentee ballots requested from non-County sources are received by the Department within legal deadlines and are handled efficiently;

❑ Evaluate the Department's agreements with the U.S. Postal Service to ensure absentee ballots are delivered to voters within legal deadlines;

❑ Assess the Department's oversight of the Postal Service's handling of absentee ballots; and

❑ Review the U.S. Postal Service's understanding of their arrangements with the Department and their procedures for processing absentee ballots, their quality control procedures and their procedures for handling undelivered absentee ballots.
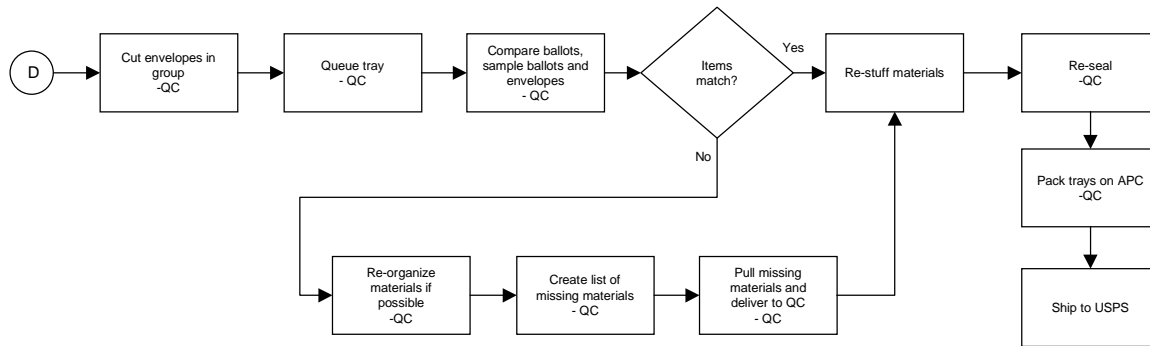
Subprocess

The process for handling absentee ballot requests is depicted in Figure 3:

Figure 3 – Absentee Ballot Request and Preparation Process

D/E = Data Entry
D/R = Document Receipt
S/V = Signature verification
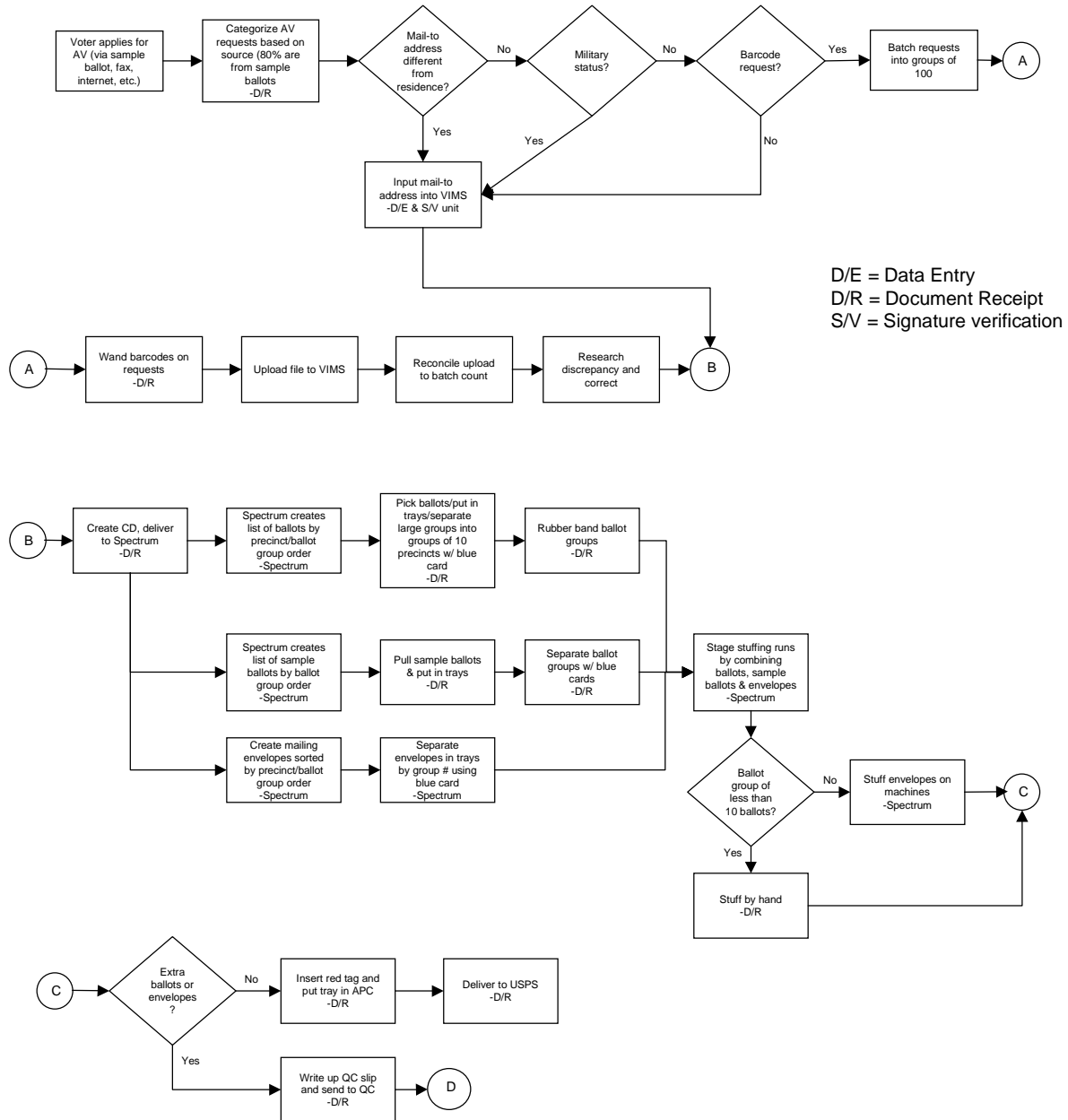
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Findings

Training for temporary staff

The RR/CC hires hundreds of temporary workers to handle the pre- and post-election tasks that a major election entails. During the November 2000 General Election, the RR/CC hired 165 temporary employees to process election-related transactions such as absentee ballot requests and affidavits. These temporary workers are typically given a brief orientation about the RR/CC and the Norwalk facility and then are given brief training on how to process the election transactions. This training is administered by the local supervisors as new temporary employees are hired. Since these temporaries are hired in small batches over the election season, a mass training regimen is impractical. The vast majority of temporaries perform simple tasks such as sorting AV request cards, scanning bar codes or pulling absentee ballots from cubbyholes based on pick lists.

Use of technology such as bar codes and high-speed printers

The processing of election transactions is becoming steadily more automated. The use of digital imaging, Microsoft Windows® screen interface and bar codes has expedited the processing of transactions that number in the hundreds of thousands. This section discusses some of these technologies. The process maps at the beginning of this section can be referenced as the processes parallel the following discussion.

Each sample ballot mailed to a registered voter has an application on the back cover for obtaining an absentee ballot for voting by mail.[4] Along with the voter's address, a voter identification number is printed on the cover of the sample ballot. When a voter mails in the application for an absentee voter (AV) ballot, the bar code on the cover is scanned with a handheld wand device similar to those used in a retail checkout. RR/CC temporary workers scan these cards in batches of 100. After each batch is scanned, the device is downloaded into a computer where the batch of 100 voter ID numbers is used to create a file of voters with street addresses and ballot type and precinct numbers. These files are used to generate lists used for picking absentee ballots, sample ballots (the voter gets an additional sample ballot along with the AV ballot in the mail) and for printing an envelope for mailing the AV ballot. Using bar codes and scanners greatly expedites the preparation and mailing

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[4] Absentee voting is available to any voter. The voter does not even need to be "absent."

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of AV ballots since the need to input voter ID numbers by hand using a keyboard is eliminated. A worker can scan a batch of 100 AV request cards in a matter of minutes.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the file of voter addresses and ballot/precinct numbers is used for printing envelopes. The process for printing and stuffing these envelopes has been automated using procedures and software developed by a company called Spectrum based in Mountlake Terrace, Washington. The Spectrum system is also linked to the verification of voter signatures after the AV ballots are returned by voters. The Spectrum process begins with the voter files created from the AV request cards. This file is loaded into a high-speed envelope-printing machine. This machine sprays the voter name and address and, using bar codes, the voter's zip code and ID number on the envelope. The Spectrum system also prints lists of AV ballots sorted by ballot type and precinct number and lists of sample ballots sorted by ballot type. The lists and files correspond to each other so that a batch of AV requests eventually produces corresponding batches of envelopes, sample ballots and AV ballot cards. These materials are then staged and loaded into antiquated, but adequate, envelope-stuffing machines. The Spectrum system expedites the AV ballot preparation process by allowing three groups of workers to operate in a parallel fashion preparing materials for mailing AV ballots. It should be noted that the envelope-printing and envelope-stuffing operation is managed and staffed using contractors employed by Spectrum, not RR/CC employees.

The preparation, staging and delivery of AV ballots and processing returned AV ballots is a meticulous, time-consuming process. Any technology application that can expedite these processes should be evaluated and implemented if feasible. This is especially true given the increasing popularity of absentee voting. During the November 2000 General Election, 543,000 Los Angeles County voters used absentee ballots, up from 396,000 during the 1996 General Election.[5]

Additional technologies used for expediting election transactions include verification of voter signatures on AV ballot return envelopes using imaged signatures and using intelligent character recognition or ICR for data entry of new voter registration affidavits. These technologies are discussed in other sections.

Quality control procedures at the RR/CC

As mentioned in the preceding discussion, the Spectrum system is designed so that three, parallel processes converge resulting in corresponding batches of AV ballot cards, sample ballots and printed AV envelopes. These materials are then staged and envelopes are stuffed and sealed. This section will describe the quality control procedures used in this operation.

The most crucial aspect of the operation is ensuring that voters receive the correct AV ballot card. Since the ballot card has no identifying information that would be apparent to voters they have to trust that the ballot is coded for their specific ballot type and precinct. This task was more difficult as the State Election Code required counties, for the November 2000 election only, to tally absentee ballot results by precinct. Prior to this, the RR/CC combined absentee results by ballot group. Counting absentee ballots by precinct requires that the

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[5] For the November 2000 General Election, 630,000 absentee ballots were mailed. Of the 543,000 absentee ballots returned, 425,000 were verified and counted on election eve.

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ballots be coded by ballot type (as was done previously) and precinct number. When selecting ballot cards for fulfilling absentee ballot requests the staff must be sure to select the specific ballot card or the ballot will be counted in the incorrect precinct.

RR/CC workers pick absentee ballot cards from a "pick list" that lists the number of ballot cards for each ballot type/precinct number combination. The worker picks ballot cards segregating them by ballot type. Other workers select the proper number of sample ballots to match up with the ballot cards. Meanwhile, the envelopes are being printed with the voter addresses. Finally, a Spectrum employee combines these materials and checks to make sure that the ballot type number is consistent prior to stuffing and sealing. After each batch of envelopes is stuffed the machine is checked to see if there are any leftover envelopes or ballot cards. If there are leftovers, the tray is designated for the Quality Control unit. Batches with no leftover materials are tagged with a red political mail tag and stacked in all-purpose carriers (APCs) for delivery by RR/CC truck to the USPS sorting facility on Central Avenue in Los Angeles.

Envelopes in batches designated for quality control are opened by a mechanical letter opener and queued for a quality control (QC) worker. These workers go through each piece in a tray comparing the ballot and precinct number on the materials. The usual scenario is that the workers pulling absentee ballot cards pulled either one too many or one too few for a particular ballot type/precinct number combination. This would throw off the batch by one or two items resulting in leftover materials in the envelope-stuffing machines. The QC workers will first try to reorganize the materials so that each mail piece has the correct materials. If this is not possible, the QC worker makes a list of missing materials; these materials are then obtained, the envelopes restuffed and resealed and loaded onto the APCs.

There may be situations where a batch has both one too few and one too many ballot cards. In this case, the total number of ballot cards would compare favorably with the envelopes and sample ballots and the staff operating the stuffing machines would not notice the discrepancy. In this scenario, since ballot types are not intermixed within batches, each voter's ballot would be tallied correctly for the contests and measures but a few ballots would not be tallied in the correct precinct. Most likely these mis-tallies would not result in a material discrepancy when tallying AV ballots by precinct. This scenario was considered by the RR/CC and Spectrum staff. Detecting these types of discrepancies would be time-consuming and difficult and it was deemed to be an acceptable risk.

Handling AV ballot delivery problems

In the event that a voter notifies the RR/CC that a requested AV ballot was not delivered, the RR/CC "suspends" the mailed AV ballot (if it was indeed sent) in the VIMS system and sends another ballot. Suspending the misdelivered ballot prevents it from being counted if it is eventually found or delivered and subsequently voted and sent in. If both ballots are voted and sent in, the original ballot is counted and the second ballot is invalidated. A situation where two ballots are voted can also result in a referral to the voter fraud section of the County District Attorney for investigation.

Different mail pieces and contents for General Election

The AV ballot materials used in the November 2000 General Election are different from those used in the preceding March 2000 Primary Election. The return envelope is larger making the pieces easier for USPS sorting equipment to handle. Also, in previous elections, a small, plastic pin was inserted into AV ballot envelopes along with the ballot card and sample ballot. This pin was used by voters for punching the ballot card. This pin had a tendency to clog the USPS sorting machines slowing down the sorting operation and necessitating that many mail pieces be hand sorted. This plastic pin is no longer being included in the ballot materials. Voters were instructed to use a bent paper clip or other sharp object for the punching operation.

Procedures used for non-RR/CC AV requests and working with political organizations

Thousands of voters request AV ballots using AV request cards prepared by political parties and campaigns. The RR/CC works with these organizations to encourage a consistent format for AV request cards. This consistent format makes it easier for RR/CC workers to quickly identify the necessary information such as the send-to address (if different from the voter's home address).

The RR/CC notifies these campaigns regarding the deadline for submitting AV requests (October 31), but does not continually monitor their efforts to comply with the deadline. Due to the large number of campaigns in the County, having a continual liaison with these campaigns to ensure compliance with the deadline is deemed impractical. Those AV requests that arrive after the deadline are not honored.

AV request cards generated by political parties and campaigns are completed by voters and mailed into the RR/CC. RR/CC workers segregate these non-RR/CC AV requests for processing. As mentioned earlier, RR/CC-generated AV request cards (approximately 80% of the total requests) have preprinted bar codes that allow expedited processing of the requests. Most non-RR/CC requests do not have these bar codes and must be processed separately.

Non-bar coded requests are batched and sent to the Data Entry unit on the fourth floor. Workers in this unit input the names and/or addresses into the VIMS voter registration system to correctly identify the voter and generate a record that is included in the file used by the Spectrum system for producing AV envelopes and picking AV ballots. At this point, the non-RR/CC AV requests are treated the same as RR/CC requests and are expedited in the same fashion.

Coordination with the USPS

The RR/CC arranged a meeting with the USPS and their mailing vendors on September 14, 2000 to discuss the RR/CC's plans for mailing election materials during the November 2000 General Election season. The meeting was attended by 24 USPS representatives and by staff from Diversified Direct and Merrill Corporation, vendors handling the sample ballot production and sorting, and by Spectrum. The agenda for this meeting covered:

❑ Plans for mailing sample ballots

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❑ Plans for mailing absentee ballots

❑ Troubleshooting procedures in the event of delivery problems

❑ Use of first-class postage for AV ballots

❑ Picking up AV ballot returns at the Central Avenue SCF

This meeting was conducted to ensure that the expectations of the RR/CC were communicated to all the key players and to decide on common procedures for handling problems.

Use of first-class postage and mail confirmation

The RR/CC had extensive communication with the USPS after several thousand AV ballots were apparently not delivered to voters during the March 2000 Primary Election. While the fate of these ballots was never determined to anyone's satisfaction, it was generally acknowledged that using third-class postage on AV ballots may have contributed to a less-than-earnest treatment of the AV ballots at the USPS. The delivery standard for third-class mail pieces is 7 to 10 days compared to 1 to 3 days for first-class mail. For this reason it was decided to mail all absentee ballots by first-class for the November 2000 General Election.[6] Using first-class postage resulted in an additional $200,000 in postage costs over the cost of third-class postage. For future elections, the RR/CC will use some combination of first- and third-class postage to reap the financial benefits of the lower third-class rate.

Quality control procedures used by the USPS and RR/CC coordination

The USPS sorts mail at seven large sorting plants scattered around the Los Angeles Region. Called Sectional Centers or SCFs[7], these plants are located in:

1. Los Angeles at Central and Florence (the main Los Angeles plant that replaced the old Terminal Annex facility)

2. Santa Clarita

3. Inglewood

4. Long Beach

5. Pasadena

6. City of Industry

7. Santa Ana

These plants are large, industrial, tightly controlled environments where the bulk of the mail traversing around Los Angeles is initially sorted. From these plants, mail is sent to other sorting plants around the country and the world. Each SCF is also responsible for breaking

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[6] In the past, all absentee ballots were sent using first-class postage. However, due to the potential savings of third-class postage (i.e., 11 cents per piece versus 77 cents for first class) the RR/CC opted to use the lower rate for ballots delivered to addresses within the County. Ballots sent out-of-state, overseas or just prior to the deadline were sent using first-class postage. In addition, third-class postage had been used by other large counties for years.

[7] It was never determined what the "F" represented in the SCF acronym.

down mail into smaller, sorted batches destined for local Direct Delivery Unit or DDU (i.e., a local post office). Anyone with a mailbox knows that most mail is business bulk mail (commonly known as "junk mail") and the SCFs are designed to process enormous amounts of business bulk mail. Because of their similar weights and dimensions and printed addresses, political mail, including RR/CC mail pieces, are run through the same processes as business bulk mail.

The following process map shows the procedure that was observed for handling political mail at the Central Avenue SCF in Los Angeles:

Figure 4 – USPS sorting process

SCF = Sectional Center
DDU = Destination Delivery Unit
APC = All-purpose carrier
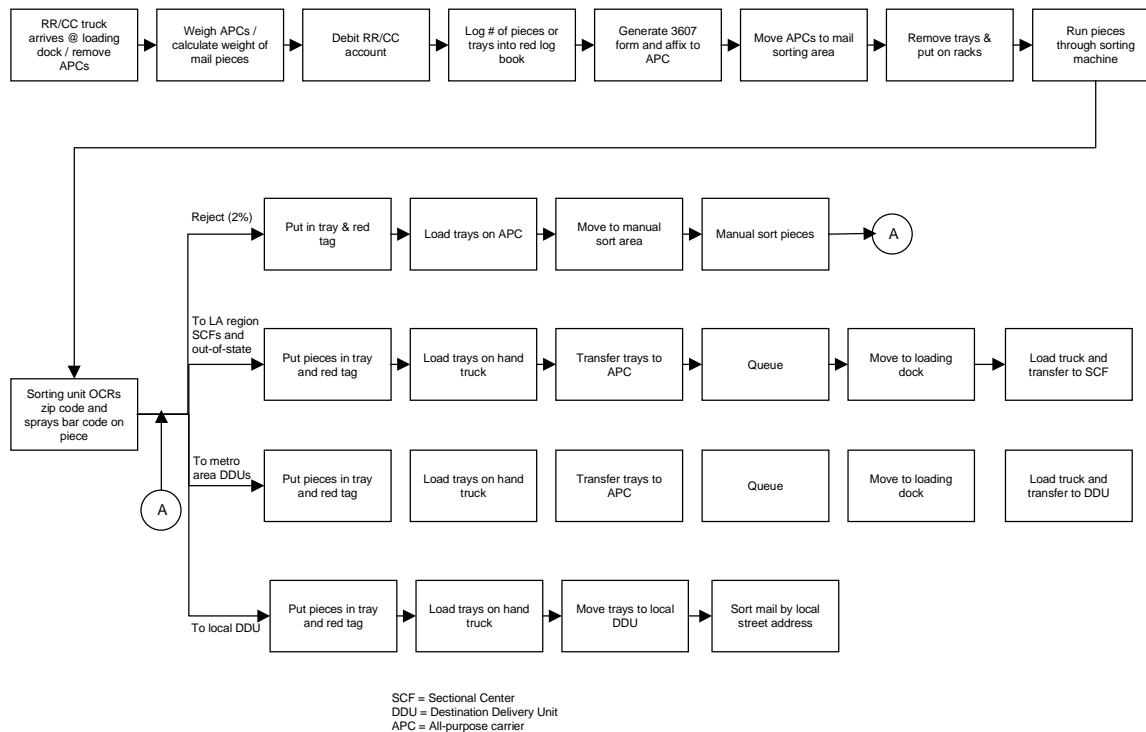
Because of the time-sensitive nature of political mail, the USPS attempts to expedite delivery of these mail pieces. However, due to the sheer scale of the SCFs and the volume running through them, it is difficult to keep track of specific batches of mail particularly third-class mail which has a less stringent delivery standard. The USPS has two standard quality control procedures for ensuring that political mail is expedited. First, each station in an SCF has a red binder for logging in political mail when it arrives at a station for handling. (See the Appendix for a sample page from the logbook.) In this way, a shipment of political mail can be tracked as it wends its way through the facility. Secondly, each tray or container of political mail is designated with a red, cardstock tag. This tag alerts any passing postal worker that it is political mail that should be handled with more urgency than regular third-class mail.

The Central Avenue SCF also instituted some additional measures for expediting these mail pieces. These additional measures were intended to avoid a repeat of the March 2000

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election problem. At Central Avenue, the staff insisted that the RR/CC deliver AV ballots by 1:00 p.m. every day to ensure that the mail is processed before that shift goes off duty. The USPS managers wanted to handle the mail on one shift to avoid a handoff and to avoid mixing the AV ballots with incoming business bulk mail, mail that typically arrives around 5:00 p.m. The goal was to have the RR/CC mail sorted and loaded on APCs ready for delivery to other stations by 3:00 p.m.

The Central Avenue staff also attempted to isolate the AV ballots on one sorting unit each time so that it could be monitored more easily.

The consultants conducted four visits to the Central Avenue SCF to observe how the AV ballots were handled. Each time it appeared that the pieces were isolated from the regular bulk mail flow and expedited. During one unannounced visit, the USPS staff arranged for an ad hoc team of workers to hand sort the entire shipment of AV ballots rather than use an automated sorting machine.[8] The ad hoc team was tightly monitored by at least three supervisors who chipped in and hand-sorted pieces themselves.

The consultants also observed that the USPS staff was diligent about logging in the political mail shipments and using red tags to designate each tray of mail as political. We suspect that our presence had a beneficial impact on the diligence that was directed to the RR/CC mail.

Role of SCFs in processing mail and variations in quality control procedures

A key consideration in evaluating USPS procedures is that while all of the AV ballots are first processed at the Central Avenue SCF (described in the previous section), much of the sorting actually occurs at the other SCFs and at smaller facilities scattered around the County. To determine if the procedures in place at Central Avenue are used in these other facilities, the consultants conducted an unannounced visit to the Long Beach SCF to observe the handling of shipments of AV ballots. These ballots would have been initially sorted at Central Avenue earlier in the day, shipped to Long Beach in the evening and sorted down to the DDU level during the night for delivery to the DDUs the following morning. Our findings included:

❑ The Long Beach SCF maintained red logbooks for tracking political mail but upon inspection it did not appear that shipments were regularly logged in. For example, the logbook did not have an entry for RR/CC AV ballots for the previous seven days although ballots would likely have been arriving each day for sorting; and

❑ Incoming political mail was not isolated from the regular business bulk mail nor were there any discernible controls for handling political mail differently.

While there were no apparent systemic delivery problems during the November 2000 election season, the looser controls at other sorting plants could create the potential for mis-deliveries in the future.

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[8] This manual sorting was apparently due to the limited number of zip codes in the shipment; it was decided that manual sorting would be faster since the pieces would end up in only a few sorted batches.

Conclusions

The RR/CC has implemented bar code technology to expedite the fulfillment of absentee ballot requests. Bar codes allow the efficient production of envelopes and staging of ballots and other materials. The RR/CC has also implemented quality control procedures to ensure that voters receive the correct ballot. These procedures require that a high percentage of AV ballot envelopes (we estimate 25% of all runs) must be opened after stuffing and sealing and double-checked. This double-checking slows down processing and requires additional staff but does provide a high degree of assurance. Given the importance of providing all registered with the ability to cast ballots this extraordinary due diligence is appropriate.

Workers, most of whom are temporary, are given basic instructions on how to handle election transactions when they start work. Most of this processing involves simple, rote tasks that do not require a more complicated training regimen.

The RR/CC works with campaigns to achieve consistency in the format of AV ballot application forms and to communicate timing requirements but does not follow up to ensure that applications are received by the legal deadline. Given the number of campaigns, this type of follow-up would be impractical.

The USPS has improved its oversight and quality control procedures relating to time-sensitive political mail at their main sorting plant. Controls at other sorting plants do not appear to be as stringent. The RR/CC should implement measures during subsequent major elections to ensure that the USPS implements measures to handle election mail with due care and punctuality.

Recommendations

Recommendation 2 – Explore the feasibility of using the sample ballot mailing house for the initial AV ballot mailing; use first-class postage for subsequent AV ballot mailings

The RR/CC should explore the feasibility of using Diversified Direct for sorting and delivering the initial run of AV ballots (generated for permanent absentee voters). Diversified Direct delivers most sample ballots directly to DDUs bypassing the large USPS sorting plants and shaving off a day or two in delivery time. By using Diversified Direct, RR/CC could use third-class postage for the AV ballots and expect expedited delivery at a lower cost.

Subsequent shipments of AV ballots should continue to be sent using first-class postage and handled by the Central Avenue plant.

Recommendation 3 – Use monitors and spot-checking at USPS facilities

Although the USPS implemented tighter quality control procedures at the Central Avenue SCF during the November 2000 election period, procedures at other SCFs may not be as secure. In addition, should quality control measures at the SCFs lapse, the RR/CC is not in a position to know until delivery problems arise and requested materials do not arrive at voters' residences. To alleviate these risks, the RR/CC should assign a small staff (e.g., two or three individuals) of monitors to perform spot checks of USPS facilities during processing

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of RR/CC political mail. These staffpeople should conduct scheduled and unannounced visits at the seven SCFs during the election season.

Processing Returned Absentee Ballots

Questions to be Answered

Specific questions posed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors include:

❑ Evaluate the Department's procedures for processing absentee ballots returned by voters;

❑ Assess the process for validating voter signatures and use of technology to do so;

❑ Assess the methods used to make sure absentee ballots are sorted correctly by ballot type in order to be properly counted;

❑ Assess the process for handling absentee ballots that are damaged or have other problems to correctly record the voters' intent; and

❑ Evaluate the Department's arrangements with the U.S. Postal Service for absentee ballot pick-up at the closing of polls on Election Day.

Subprocess

The process for handling returned absentee ballots is depicted in Figure 5:

Figure 5 – Absentee Ballot Returns Process

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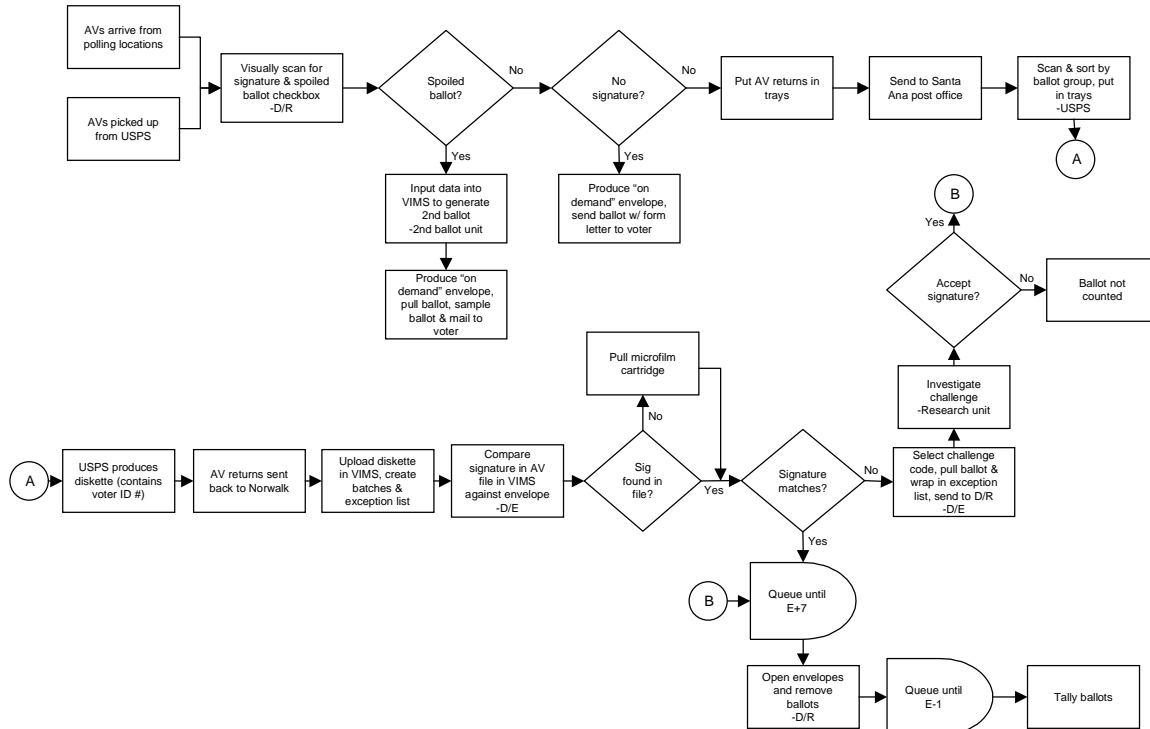
Findings

AV ballot sorting and tally procedure

In 1999, legislation (AB 1530) was enacted that requires registrars to tally absentee ballots by precinct for the November 2000 election only. The law required counties to somehow mark absentee ballots or the return envelopes so they can be counted by precinct. The objective of the legislation is to provide more complete voting data; previously, absentee votes were tallied by ballot style rather than separately according to the precinct where the absentee voter resided.

In response to AB 1530, the RR/CC has implemented a system of labeling the actual AV ballot cards with a precinct identifier. This method represents a risk averse approach to the problem by protecting the integrity of vote counting by maintaining a paper trail (i.e., the precinct coded ballots). The major disadvantage is that staging AV ballot cards for insertion into envelopes requires a careful selection of ballot cards to ensure that each absentee voter is using the correct ballot card.

Once the AV ballot cards are returned (by election day) and signatures are verified, the ballots are run through the automatic ballot card readers in the same manner as regular precinct ballots.

Use of Spectrum ballot sorting process

The Spectrum system for AV ballot processing has the potential to greatly increase AV ballot process productivity. The key impediment to processing AV ballots is the need to visually compare each signature on the AV ballot return envelope with the signature on file at the RR/CC to ensure that the person registered is the one who voted the ballot. In previous years, workers had to obtain signatures on file by searching microfilm records of registration affidavits. With the advent of digital imaging, images of voter registration affidavits can be queried from a desktop computer using searching logic such as name, voter ID number, street address, etc. The VIMS system increases efficiency further by allowing workers to compare multiple signatures at the same time. The Spectrum system also prepares electronic indexes that bring up imaged voter signatures in the same order as AV ballot return envelopes. This allows workers to verify signatures in sequential order rather than search around for each signature as each envelope is processed.

The Spectrum system is driven by the creation of an electronic index of voter ID numbers. This index is generated by running AV return envelopes through high-speed sorting machines at a private facility in Santa Ana post. The sorting machine reads the bar-coded voter ID number printed on each envelope and creates the file. The envelopes are then sorted into the same order as the indexed ID numbers. The index file is then uploaded onto the RR/CC computer and used to display the imaged voter signatures.

Signature verification procedures

RR/CC workers verify the authenticity of the AV ballots by comparing the signature on the return envelope against the signature on file. Most of these signatures are displayed on the

screen in sequential order from imaged signatures but occasionally a worker will have to make a copy of the voter's registration affidavit from microfilm to compare against.

Workers compare the handwriting of the two signatures to ensure that the signatures were written by the same individual. Signatures that are not obviously similar are noted with a "challenge code" and set aside for further research. The Research Unit will have another look at the signatures and make the determination whether to accept the signature or not.

Comparing signatures can be difficult if the signature on file was drawn from a voter registration form filled out years ago. Many of the signatures are so illegible that they do not convert well into a digital image.

Even with productivity gains from imaging and sorting, the manual signature verification process is a tedious and time-consuming process compared to processing precinct ballots. Election administrators will probably have to explore additional productivity measures to address the increasing popularity of absentee voting. One technology that shows promise is electronic signature verification. This method involves using a computer program that compares a pair of imaged signatures and calculates differences in pen strokes. If the difference is below a preset threshold, the signatures are deemed to be from the same individual. Using electronic signature verification would automate a significant portion of the absentee ballot workload. Some signatures would fall above the threshold for electronic verification and would have to be examined by hand. This technology is currently used by banks for comparing signatures on checks and signature cards with an acceptable degree of success. Election technology vendors are exploring its adaptability for election administration.

Processes used for damaged or spoiled ballots

The RR/CC has a small unit dedicated to processing damaged or spoiled ballots. These workers examine damaged and spoiled ballots, including AV ballots, and re-create the ballot using a new ballot card if the voter's intent can be determined by examining the damaged ballot. Holes are punched in the replacement card and the new card is included in the vote tally. The original card is retained along with the new card in case of a recount.

Picking up absentee ballots at the USPS

The RR/CC picks up voted AV ballots every morning at around 7:00 a.m. These ballots, along with other RR/CC mail, are stored in trays on a rack in a designated area of the Central Avenue facility. The RR/CC also makes a final pickup of AV ballots at 8:00 p.m. on election day. Any absentee ballots arriving after this time are not counted.

Conclusions

The validation of voter signatures affixed to absentee ballot return envelopes is the most tedious and time-consuming election transaction. The RR/CC has implemented scanning and sorting technology that significantly increases the productivity of absentee ballot voter signature validation. Given the ever-increasing popularity of absentee voting, the

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investment in technology and process improvements is appropriate. The RR/CC is looking into additional productivity-improving technology such as automated signature verification.[9]

In response to changes in State election laws, the RR/CC has implemented a new method for coding absentee ballots by ballot type and precinct number. This new coding method requires a more tedious and meticulous process on the front-end for preparing absentee ballots but also results in a much better paper trail backup of election results. We feel that the RR/CC made the correct decision in selecting this process and method of counting.

The RR/CC also has a fair and accurate process for handling spoiled and damaged ballots so long as the voters intent can be discerned.   Finally, the RR/CC has an appropriate procedure for picking up absentee ballots at the USPS main sorting plant on election eve.

Recommendations

Recommendation 4: Implement process changes to facilitate more efficient, large scale absentee voting

To mitigate the high processing costs of handling AV ballots, the RR/CC should pilot the use of electronic signature verification. Electronic signature verification would greatly expedite the tedious, time-consuming job of signature validation associated with absentee ballots. Electronic signature verification requires an extensive database of intelligible, imaged voter signatures.   As new signatures are obtained from voters (either through registration updates, absentee ballot requests and absentee ballot return envelopes), they would either augment or replace older, less intelligible signatures already imaged and on file. Over time, the database of imaged signatures would improve in quality making electronic signature verification more effective.

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[9] Although electronic signature verification has been applied successfully in banking applications its use in elections has not been attempted at this time.

Appendix

This appendix includes several reports and forms referenced in the body of the report:

❑ Political Mail Log report format used by the U.S. Post Office for tracking the movement of political mail through their sorting facilities;

❑ Absent Voting Status Report showing the cumulative number of requests received or updated, AV ballots mailed or returned and the number of snags related to AV ballot returns (e.g., no voter signature, spoiled ballot, etc.);

❑ Absent Voter Progress Report showing the daily cumulative totals of AV ballot requests received and fulfilled and the number of AV ballot returns received; and

❑ Workload and Personnel Status for Data Entry Report showing the daily status of election transaction processing. The report shows the number of transactions completed and outstanding and the number of personnel assigned to each transaction type.

Although electronic signature verification has been applied successfully in banking applications its use in elections has not been attempted at this time.

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POLITICAL MAIL LOG

Post Office:

Supervisor:

ZIP +4:

(a) Name of Candidate or Political Maller	(b) Description of Malling	(c) Date/Time Received	(d) Quantity Received # of pcs	(e) Date of Election (or req. del.)	(f) Date Distributed Dispatched or Delivered	(g) Amount (pcs) Not Delivered by Deadline	(h) Amount (pcs) to UBBM	(i) Comments

|SENT VOTING STATUS REPORT

GENERAL ELECTION NOVEMBER 7. 2000

ACTIVITY DATE: ___November 7. 2000___

Request Received* & _____ 627,621

Be Read _____ 0

Requests Updated* _____ 640,082

To Be Updated#	0	0	12.000	12,000
	Data Entry	Wand	Snag/Dup	

Absent Voter Ballots Mailed/Issued & _____ 617,161

Ready To Mail _____ 0

To Be Processed	0	0	0	0
	Envelopes to be made	Machine & Manuel Insertion	QC	

AV Ballots Returned* @	443,079	
AV Ballots Updated* (Does not include Sig Verification)		465,185
AV Ballots To Be Updated (Scanned & Sig Verification)	34,000	
AV Ballots Processed Ready for Boards (Approximately)		2,000
AV Ballots Processed Ready for Counting (Approximately)@		403,800

142 Trays

Ballot Snags

No Signatures	4,540
2nd Spoiled Issued	745
2nd Request Telephone	2,115
Total Received	8,260
Total Cleared	6,981
To Be Worked %	1,279

& Does not include Touchscreen requests

@ Does not include AV Ballots returned from Polls

* Cumulative and Too Late Request, Hand Count

\# Includes Snags. Dups

% Too Lates to be mailed

c: C. McCormack   G. Romero

   D. Bonds   Doc. Rec. Sups.   & Revised

   L. Patterson   am:ex.Doc.Rec.Status.Gen00

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
REGISTRAR-RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK
ABSENT VOTER PROGRESS REPORT

GENERAL ELECTION										NOV. 7, 2000	
DATE	REQUESTS				BALLOTS					RETURNED BALLOTS	
	MAIL RECEIVED	COUNTER	DAILY TOTAL	CULMULATIVE TOTAL	MAILED	COUNTER PICK-UP	DAILY TOTAL	CUMULATIVE TOTAL		DAILY TOTAL	CUMULATIVE TOTAL
Oct. 31	15,528	621	16,149	618,915	11,711	621	12,332	591,881		50,400	229,479
Nov. #1	607	323	607	619,238	8,110	323	8,433	600,314		34,781	264,260
2	1,806	294	2,413	619,532	10,301	294	10,595	610,909		36,581	300,841
3	965	399	3,378	619,931	2,105	399	2,504	613,413		40,031	340,872
4	391	495	3,769	620,426	1,027	495	1,522	614,935		41,460	382,332
5	267	523	4,036	620,949	0	523	523	615,458		26,806	409,138
6	651	672	4,687	621,621	0	672	672	616,130		5,556	414,694
7	282	1,031	4,969	622,652	0	1,031	1,031	617,161		28,385	443,079
8	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
9	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
10	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
11	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
12	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
13	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
14	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
15	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
16	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
17	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
18	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
19	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
20	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
21	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
22	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
23	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
24	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
25	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
26	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
27	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
28	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079
29	0	0	4,969	622,652	0	0	0	617,161		0	443,079

c: C. McCormack
   D. Bonds
   L. Patterson
   Al Sups.

*PAV   *Declares   #Too Lates

November 14, 2000
Activity for: November 13, 2000

TO: Lorraine Patterson
FROM: Dorothy Scates
SUBJECT: Workload and Personnel Status for Data Entry

JOB DESCRIPTION	COMPLETED	TO BE WORKED	PERSONNEL ASSIGNED	DATE CERTIFIED	DATE DUE
AFFIDAVITS					
Microfilming	0	198,198	0	*	
Scanning (New)	0	0	0		
Affidavits Updated 11/10/00	75	562	1		
Linking Affidavits/Microfilming Update	45,580	7,804	0		
Snag Affidavits	0	21	0		
Cancels (10,367)	5,436	4,041	0		
Felonies (1,075)	50	1,025	0		
SPECIAL PROJECTS					
DMV	3,804	0	0		
VNC Cards	20,933	0	0		
LACERA ELECTION					
Return Ballots	1,193	0	0		
ROSTER NOTES					
Primary Election	23,462	0	0		
MISCELLANEOUS/VOTER UPDATE					
Voter Correction & Cancellations/Office	0	0	1		
PETITIONS					
Hollywood Proposed Incorp. (38,003) (1,140) 3%	1,140	0	0	9/6/00	9/22/00
Hollywood Proposed Incorp. (38,003) 100%	38,003	0	0	10/20/00	10/20/00
Hollywood Proposed Incorp. Supplemental (7,291)	1,544	5,747	6		11/20/00
South El Monte Recall (1,402)	1,402	0	0	10/3/00	10/11/00
Manhattan Beach Conservation Act (3,562)	3,368	194	0	10/23/00	10/24/00
Pasadena City Ordinance (12,112)	10,414	1,698	0	* 10/30/00	11/15/00
GENERAL ELECTION 11/7/00					
AV Ballots	10,225	0	21		
Provisional Ballots (81,607)	2,275	99,264	101		
	0	0	0		
		TOTAL	130		

Personnel Out: Perm - 1; Rec - 11

Supervisor Out - 0

NOTE: * Microfilming ceased 10/6/00, and resumed on 10/23/00.
On updated affidavits. To be microfilmed 198,198.

*City Clerk requested to stop at sufficient amount.

c: Conny McCormack
   Darlene Bonds
   Michael Petrucello
   Tom Lopez
   Steve Logan
   Ray Ching

CONNY B. McCORMACK
REGISTRAR-RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK

June 29, 2001

TO: J. Tyler McCauley
             Auditor-Controller

FROM: Conny B. McCormack
             Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk

SUBJECT: **RESPONSE TO MANAGEMENT AUDIT AND SUPPLEMENTAL ELECTION TRANSACTION REVIEW AUDIT**

Attached is our Department's final response to the November 2000 Management Audit and January 2001 Election Transactions Review and follows our November 16, 2000 interim response. Although we planned to have this in-depth response and action plan submitted by the end of March, we were delayed due to the requirement to conduct three major unscheduled special elections: the 24th State Senate District on 3/6/01, the 32nd Congressional District on 4/10/01, and the 49th State Assembly District on 5/15/01. As such, I apologize for this delayed response.

Overall, we agree with most of the findings in the Management Audit (52 finding recommendations) and the January 2001 supplemental Election Transactions Review Audit (4 finding recommendations). We appreciate the considerable amount of time *Strategica* Auditors devoted to thoroughly assessing our programs, operations, staffing and the future direction of the Department into the 21st century. Of the combined 56 findings from these two Audits, 19 have already been implemented. We also appreciated the Audit's numerous positive comments and recognition of the many pro-active customer service enhancements our Department has made over the past five years.

Additionally, we were pleased to see the positive references to the significant operational changes that have occurred and/or are already underway in both the Election and Recorder bureaus. These changes have highlighted a critical foundational deficiency in the lack of adequate mid-level management staffing of our Department. The Audit fully recognized this major problem by recommending the allocation of ten Assistant Division Manager positions to fill key gaps in our organizational structure and to bridge the "critical thinking" needs between Section Head employees and MAPP Division Mangers. If allocated, these Assistant Division Managers, in concert with other important mid-management items requested in our FY 2001-2002 budget submission, with allow our Department to fully address and implement the referenced improvement recommendations. Included in our Department's request for FY 2001-2002 were 108 new budgeted positions, offset by the elimination of 58 positions which are no longer germane or meet the main mission and objective of our Department. We are requesting CAO and Board funding support of $3.1 million to allow our Department to achieve the recommendations and intent of the Audits and to further enhance customer service delivery.

In our interim report, we agreed with the Audit recommendation to formalize a strategic plan for the Department. On April 26, 2001 we entered into a contract with the Management Audit firm *Strategica* to oversee development of a Strategic Plan in conjunction with our Department's management team. Yesterday we held our first all day Management Strategic Planning Forum. A second one is scheduled for August 29, 2001 and is intended to be the synthesizing forum for the completion of our Strategic Plan slated for October, 2001. The finalization of this plan will provide clarity and continuity of vision for our employees, partners, stakeholders and County family.

With regards to the Information Technology (IT) Audit comments and recommendations in *Findings I* category, we believe the findings reflected an overall generalization of IT projects and events and understated the degree of significant technology system conversions and organizational change that affected the Department in 1999-2000. As such, we included an overall observation narrative to fully explain occurrences in addition to addressing the specific IT recommendations.

In conclusion, myself and our management team are pleased with the overall tone of the Audit, the many meaningful recommendations, and the recognition that mid-level staffing augmentation (with CAO and Board funding support) is crucial to our Department's long-range ability to function. Additionally, we appreciate the Audit's recognition that the Department can boast a high level of employee satisfaction based on survey responses, that our stakeholders hold us in high esteem, and that, above all, we recognize the main goal of providing superior public service as our inherent vision.

We look forward to working with you and your staff, the Board of Supervisors, Chief Administrative Office, and Department of Human Resources, in the implementation of these recommendations.

Fs:kcs
Attachment

c. Each Supervisor
   David E. Janssen
   Michael J. Henry

RECOMMENDATION A-1:

Develop a formal RR/CC strategic planning process and plan that sets an annual action agenda for the Department and its divisions.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation and, at the beginning of 2001, commenced the process of hiring a consultant to develop a viable Strategic Plan. Using the CAO's Master Agreement list for consultants in this area, a contract with the selected consultant was executed on April 26, 2001 at a cost of $50,000. The first of two management retreats will be held on June 28 followed by a second management session dedicated to Strategic Planning on August 29, 2001. The specific goals of these meetings include collaborative efforts by all Managers relative to (1) identifying issues of strategic importance to the Department; (2) identifying strategic opportunities for service and revenue enhancement, cost reduction and operational improvements; (3) developing a mission statement to communicate our Department's sense of purpose and provide validation for work performed; (4) developing strategic principles to guide Department investment and decision making; (5) identifying strategic options and alternatives to address issues and realize opportunities; (6) synthesizing a strategic plan that serves the Department for the next 5–10 years and also integrates with the County strategy; and (7) communicating the developed strategy to employees, partners and stakeholders of the broader County government community. Completion is planned for October 2001. Additionally, the Departments' Personnel Office has been assigned the responsibility for participating in the Countywide inter-Departmental strategic planning process.

RECOMMENDATION B-1:

Augment the types of performance measures monitored by the RR/CC.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation. The audit points out a significant number of performance measures are currently in place. The Department's existing management staff have been instructed to identify other performance measures that would be viable and meaningful. Determination of additional measures are also anticipated once the full complement of executive and management staff, recommended by the audit, are hired. This will also be a focus of ongoing management retreats. Identification of additional performance measures is anticipated by June 2002.

RECOMMENDATION B-2:

Develop a user-friendly reporting format.

Response: The Department agrees with his recommendation.   Because of the significant administrative effort of this recommendation and the inherent nexus to recommendations A-1 and B-1, the Department will implement this recommendation upon the completion of those items anticipated by December 2002.

RECOMMENDATION C-1:

Define overall strategy for administering elections.

Response: The Department currently has an overall strategy and extensive documentation for administering elections including a comprehensive calendar of events for planning and administering each election as well as a robust post election review/critique process culminating in a written document with recommendations that are monitored for completion. We do agree that there should be a comprehensive written document outlining the overall strategy for administering elections. This will be accomplished in two phases; the first involves completion of a Department-wide Strategic Plan focusing on the long-range purpose, goals, expectations and technology advancements in meeting the main missions of the Department (as outlined in Recommendation A-1). Phase two concentrates on individual Bureau goals and objectives and will incorporate operational, procedural, legislative and technological enhancements at a functional program level. Completion of recommendation C-1 is anticipated by December 2002.

RECOMMENDATION C-2:

Evaluate alternatives for addressing poll worker shortages.

Response: The Department agrees that the recruitment of pollworkers is a serious concern shared by every County in the State and Nation. Beginning in 1998, the Department instituted several creative new programs to augment pollworker recruitment, such as the high school Student Poll Worker Program, the voluntary County Employees Poll Worker Program and the Multilingual/Accessibility Program. These award-winning programs have grown with each election and have been so successful that they have been emulated throughout the United States in a number of jurisdictions.

The Department is also addressing this critical issue by requesting new "staff level" poll worker recruiting positions in the Departments' FY 2001-2002 budget. In order to achieve the goal of exponential growth in these new recruitment methodologies, such new positions are essential to augment the existing clerical positions in order to provide critical thinking ability and analysis to this labor-intensive process. Such new positions will allow for needed structural reorganization of the polls and officers section by designating specialty sub-units to institutionalize and enhance these alternative pollworker recruitment processes. Once these new modules are fully operational, other progressive recruiting alternatives can be incorporated, such as incentive pay for outstanding pollworkers and those who recruit friends and neighbors to work with them at the polls, a college student pollworker program, increasing polling place rental and/or pollworker stipends, expanding electronic voting methodologies, etc. Working on recommendation C-2 will be an on-going effort with the specific objective of completing the ambitious goal of "one County Employee in each of the 5,000 voting locations" by November 2002.

RECOMMENDATION C-3:

Implement new web site functions.

Response: Completed. As the audit correctly points out, the Department's website is very robust and contains a number of interactive options in both Elections and Recorder operations to provide vital information without having to travel to the main headquarters or branch office to receive services. Recent enhancements include: polling place look-up by voter's address; sample ballot specific to each voter's ballot style available by inputting address; live, election night results; directory of public officials available by voter's address; on-line candidate filing, on-line filing of business names for Recorder services, downloading Recorder and Election forms, etc. Our Department is unique in having translated information for multilingual voters on it's front page as well as information for voters with disabilities. Additionally, the Department is working toward an ambitious plan to make it's website accessible for blind users in compliance with new national standards promulgated by the federal Access Board. With regard to the specific recommendation contained in the audit, the Department is currently working with the Secretary of State and the State's Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) regarding the feasibility of enacting a seamless on-line system for campaign and candidate statement financial data. We have scheduled a meeting next month with one FPPC Chairman to further this goal. Because our Department is continually proactive in upgrading our website capabilities including leading the County's efforts in website access to the blind, we consider this recommendation complete.

RECOMMENDATION C-4:

Implement process changes to facilitate more efficient, large scale absentee voting.

Response: Completed. During the time of the audit, the Department piloted a new, automated process for absentee ballot packaging (March and November 2000 elections). Indeed, complying with the new state law to count absentee ballots by precinct (instead of by ballot style) would have been virtually impossible without this new automated process. Using this new system allowed preparation of the record-high 620,000 absentee ballot packets for the November 2000 election in a timely manner. The success of this pilot prompted the Department issue an RPP on May 2, 2001 for vendors to provide absentee ballot material processing for a proposed term of three years with two optional one-year renewal extensions. The Department plans to execute a contract in early August 2001 in time for use in the November 2001 and statewide 2002 elections to continue using this automated process and further augmenting it by digitally capturing voter signatures from either the absentee voter application form or returned absentee ballot envelopes for speedier comparison with the voter registration signatures. This methodology will allow displaying both signatures simultaneously on the PC monitor for data entry operators to visually compare and code absentee ballots as "accepted" or "challenged/rejected". Additionally, development plans are in progress for expanding this absentee system to include electronic digital comparison of application/registration signatures to expedite the signature verification process and possibly reduce election costs. If successful, we will be the first election jurisdiction to implement such an application of electronic signature comparison outside of the banking industry.

RECOMMENDATION C-5:

Enhance staffing and monitoring of election day call center.

Response: Completed and in place for the November 2000 election. A number of procedural and system enhancements have been made to expedite the handling of incoming Election Day telephone calls which swell at times to as many as 10,000 calls per hour! There are 196 interactive, phone lines now in place to provide voters automated polling place information. When the voter keys in his/her address and birthdate information, the interactive voice response (IVR) system automatically, without human intervention, connects that information on the voter file with the list of 5,000 polling places. Additionally, in November 2000 the Department expanded to 96 the "live" operator lines that are activated on major election days. Staff telephone coverage (supervisors and clerical staff) in the Absentee Voting and Voter Registration Sections are now staggered during morning/evening break and lunchtime hours to provide seamless coverage. Telephone logs are generated for major elections and evaluated to determine the number of completed calls as well as abandoned calls. Automated service message menus have been developed to direct customers to the correct Division/Section for information or submitting requests. Extra telephone lines have routinely been added to the existing communication network and additional lines have been installed for automatically forwarding lines between sections to reduce the customer waiting period for on-hold calls. Additionally, more voters find the needed information on our Department's interactive website. Development of a robust partnership with all County libraries, 88 city clerks, League of Women Voters, political parties and election advocacy groups now provides significant additional resources for voters to receive needed information, including polling place lookup which is the most common (95%+) question asked by callers on election day.

RECOMMENDATION C-6:

Enhance multilingual and ADA-related access.

Response: This has been and continues to be an on-going, priority process of the Department. Indeed, our Department's multilingual (ML) assistance program and the ADA compliance/enhancement program resulted this year in recognition by the National Commission on Election Reform (co-chaired by former Presidents Carter and Ford) and received a NACo Achievement award in June 2001. Additionally, advocacy organizations representing ML and disabled voters point to Los Angeles County as the leader to emulate with respect to compliance with laws mandating accessible polling locations and development of creative programs for disabled voters, including the blind and visually impaired. However, administering these programs is very expensive. The cost of administering the multilingual written and oral assistance programs to provide election materials and services in seven languages for the November 2000 election exceeded $2.5 million of the $21 million overall election cost. The Department has demonstrated proactive behavior in numerous ways, including the Assistant RR/CC for Election Services participation as a key member of the National Election Center's task force in this area. In this capacity, the Department was responsible for coordinating and

RECOMMENDATION C-6: (Cont'd)

implementing a nationwide mailing of ADA "how to comply" materials in early 2000 in advance of the national election. Part of this packet included development of a new polls accessibility survey which has been used by the Department to re-survey ALL of the County's nearly 5,000 polling site. The Department has identified 347 polls as being non-accessible for various reasons. Department staff have undertaken an ambitious plan to either re-locate or provide modifications to each of these locations by March 2002 toward its goals of 100 percent accessible goals for the voters of Los Angeles County. We have been informed by the American Association of Persons with Disabilities that their award for excellence will be given to our Department at the organization's annual meeting in August 2001.

The voluntary transliteration program, which is the process of reproducing phonetic sounds as closely as possible from one alphabet or writing system to another, is now institutionalized, having been successfully implemented in elections held in 2000 and 2001. The languages for which transliteration might be useful are Chinese, Japanese and Korean. Our Department has an ongoing concern with potential liability of inadvertently translating a candidate's name into an undesirable context. One example occurred when a candidate's name was transliterated into Chinese as "useless gentleman". To date, minority language community organizations and media have been very proactive in assisting with the transliteration review process. The Department has no plans to suspend this discretionary, transliteration program.

RECOMMENDATION C-7:

Delay voting booth replacement.

Response: Completed. The Department agrees with this recommendation and has suspended efforts for wholesale replacement of all 40,000 archaic wooden voting booths. However, voting booth repair is an on-going and expensive process (wood, canvass, labor) as well as requiring the cost of booth delivery prior to each election. Consequently, when a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity arose to buy sturdy, portable aluminum voting booths in excellent condition from Riverside County for less than 10% of their original cost, our Department submitted on April 16, 2001 a bid of $20 apiece to purchase 6,350 booths. On May 5, 2001 our Department was awarded the bid and the $127,000 purchase price is to be paid in the first quarter of FY 2001-2002 from the new FY funds. Consequently beginning with the November 2001 UDEL Election, these portable booths will be picked-up by the pollworkers at training classes, saving tens of thousands of dollars in delivery costs each election (the wooden booths require costly delivery). Once financial support is identified to achieve the Department's long-range strategic plan to replace the punch card voting system with a more modern, electronic voting system, no voting booths will be needed. However, as that goal is anticipated to be at least 3-5 years away, a sufficient number of viable voting booths must be maintained in inventory in good working condition. As such, the Department considers this goal complete.

RECOMMENDATION C-8:

Expedite contract to complete GIS/VIMS interface.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation, has let a contract for this service, and will complete the GIS/VIMS Interface by September 2001 in time for use in conjunction with the dicennial redistricting process.

RECOMMENDATION C-9:

Follow through on hiring of additional precinct coordinators.

Response: Completed. The Department agrees with this recommendation. For the November 2000 election, both the Precinct Coordinators and Clerk Reservists were increased from 200 to 250. Additionally, for that election the Department added a new category to the election day back-up team, Multilingual Reservists, to replace multilingual poll workers who were "no shows" on election day. These programs were very successful on election day and will be continued.

RECOMMENDATION D-1:

Relocate functions.

Response: The Department partially agrees with this recommendation. To fully implement this recommendation would require an unprecedented and completely unbudgeted amount of funds approximating $1.5 million. To initiate this recommendation, the Department has convened a Departmental Management Reengineering Team to provide recommendations in three phases: (1) immediate need requirements allowing for six small projects that can be finalized by June 30, 2001 which must be completed before the next phase; (2) study Recorder operations to determine suggested utilization of space, logistics, staffing and public service for the 1^{st}, 2^{nd}, 4^{th} and 5^{th} floors and prepare recommendations and analyses, possibly with the assistance of a consultant, based upon management input and funding capabilities by June 30, 2002; and (3) evaluate elections and technical services requirements for efficiency and effectiveness and prepare recommendations and analyses, possibly with the assistance of a consultant, based upon management input by December 2003.

RECOMMENDATION E-1:

Establish new business goals and planning models (Recorder).

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation and, in conjunction with Recommendations A1 and B1, will establish new and enhanced Recorder business goals and planning and projection standards. Completion is anticipated by June 2002.

6

RECOMMENDATION E-2:

Reengineer real estate recording, fictitious business name, and vitals procedures.

Response: The Department supports the concept of reengineering Recorder operations. Many of the recommendations appear reasonable, such as combining the Document Examination and Cashiering process and electronic transmission recordings. However, significant evaluation of the complicated proposal will be required. The Department will conduct an evaluation and feasibility study by June 2002, including implementation timelines to incorporate recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION E-3:

Outsource selected processes to facilitate reengineering (Recorder).

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation. It should be evaluated for feasibility in tandem with Recommendation E-2. Completion of feasibility study is anticipated by June 2002.

RECOMMENDATION E-4:

Establish an error threshold for minor payment discrepancies (Recorder mail business only).

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation. However, to date we have been unable to convince the Auditor-Controller that minor underpayments made by customers through the mail (i.e. sending in payment of $6.75 for a $7 fee) can be "forgiven" as the Auditor-Controller policy is based on interpretation of state law prohibiting the Department from reducing statutory fees. Consequently, thousands of labor-intensive transactions are required, including postage, in attempts to recover pennies of underpayments, costing the County more in processing than would ever be recovered. With regard to overpayments, it has been the Department's policy for years to retain Recorder overpayments of up to $10.00 unless the customer requests a refund. Therefore, an inequity of customer service exists that should be addressed. Our Department will contact the Auditor-Controller to discuss this concern in hope of resolving this ongoing problematic and costly issue of returning requests unprocessed for minor underpayments.

RECOMMENDATION E-5:

Remove (newspaper publishing company) solicitors from lobby.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation. However, County Counsel has maintained for years, and continues to assert, that the lobby is public space and solicitors of private services are permitted in the building unless safe egress and ingress are impacted. The Department has begun feasibility studies to relocate solicitors from the first floor lobby and will complete the initial evaluation by December 2001.

RECOMMENDATION E-6:

Prevent document rejections.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation to notify Public Notaries of the importance of clarity when using the notary seal when taking their oaths in order to prevent real estate document recording rejections, which is the number one reason for document rejection. Determining additional proactive measures is anticipated to be implemented by September 2001.

RECOMMENDATION E-7:

Provide a grantor/grantee index function on the RR/CC web site.

Response: The audit makes this recommendation while at the same time, in another section of the audit document, describes the public's reluctant perception to follow this recommendation due to privacy concerns. A new Assistant Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk for Recorder/Clerk Services was hired in April 2001 and will be assigned to research the desirability and, along with the Assistant Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk for Technical Services, assess the feasibility of implementing this recommendation by the December 2001.

RECOMMENDATION F-1:

Develop and adopt a records retention schedule.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation. The Department intends to formalize a Departmentwide Records Retention Schedule by June 2002.

RECOMMENDATION F-2:

Record digital images on optical media (such as DVD).

Response: Digital images are presently captured on four independent mediums: RAID disk storage, DLT tape cartridges, Jaz cartridges, and microfilm. All four mediums provide independent recoverability for disaster recovery. The DLT tape cartridges are rotated to a remote ITS/ISD secure data storage company site.

RECOMMENDATION G-1:

Create and recruit for selected Assistant Division Manager positions.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation and requested CAO, DHR and Board approval of these ten critically needed mid-level management positions which were included in the February 15, 2001 budget submission for FY 2001-2002. Allocation of these Assistant Division Manager positions is essential to carrying out many of the management recommendations in the audit and in developing and implementing the Department's Strategic Plan. CAO and Board funding for $1,249,814 to support the 10 Assistant Division Managers and their accompanying 10 Secretary II items have not, as of this date, been allocated.

RECOMMENDATION G-2:

Use the new technical director position to upgrade certain existing positions in Technical Services.

Response: The Department has a Division Manager technical staff person on the recently established DHR-CIO Committee to evaluate and rewrite classifications for information systems personnel for the entire County. This committee is meeting regularly and has resolved basic definitions of technical staff item responsibilities and duties.

RECOMMENDATION G-3:

Fill the existing ARR positions in the Recorder/Clerk and Election Services operations; place field office operations under the Executive Liaison position; recruit a departmental Chief Deputy; consolidate election-related legislative analysis under the elections services unit.

Response: Completed. The Department agrees with these recommendations with one minor change regarding supervision of branch/field office operations. In November 2000, the new ARR for Election Services was hired. In April 2001, the Department hired an ARR/CC for the Recorder/Clerk functions. Recruitment for the selection of a Chief Deputy is underway (application period June 26-July 17, 2001 with interviews anticipated in August 2001). A new Executive Liaison was hired June 18, 2001 to fill a recent vacancy. Due to the skill set of the new ARR for Recorder/Clerk and the fact that 99% of the functions performed by the branch/field offices are Recorder/Clerk functions, branch office operations have now been appropriately placed under the ARR/Recorder/Clerk who will oversee operations as well as focus on marketing the branch offices to increase their visibility with the general public and divert customers from Norwalk to more convenient branch office locations. With regard to the recommendation that election-related legislative analysis be combined under the Election Services Bureau, this was completed following the November 2000 election.

RECOMMENDATION G-4:

Relocate Division Managers to be physically adjacent to the supervisors and staff they oversee.

Response: Completed. The Department agrees in part with this recommendation. The Recorder Division Managers were relocated to the fifth floor along with the new ARR/Recorder/Clerk in April 2001 to give greater visibility and autonomy to these important Department functions. The Department has also begun the process of relocating the Technical Services Division Managers from the seventh to the sixth floor and this will be fully accomplished by July 31, 2001. The recommended preliminary deployment will be adjusted as follows:

DIVISION	AUDIT RECOMMENDED LOCATION (FLOOR OF DM AND ADM)	CURRENT FLOOR LOCATION	RECOMMENDED DEPARTMENTAL LOCATION DM	RECOMMENDED DEPARTMENTAL LOCATION ADM
Finance & Management	7	7	No Change	7
Human Resources	2	2	No Change	2
Property Records	4	7	5	5
Vital Records/Business Filings	1	7	5	5
Election Services	2 or 6	7	7	7
Polls/Service Center	6	7	7	6
Campaign/Candidate Services	2	7	7	2
Voter Records	4	7	7	4
Election Systems	6	7	6	6
Recorder Systems	4 or 6	7	6	6

We do not agree with several of the proposed audit recommendations, such as Vital Records and Business Filings being relocated to the first floor because that floor is dedicated to Recorder public counter service and is already much too crowded without attempting to add Division Manager offices. However, we are in agreement in principle that Assistant Division Manager positions proposed in this audit should be placed within their operational functions should these positions be allocated in the Department's budget. We consider this recommendation complete.

RECOMMENDATION H-1:

The RR/CC should establish a change commission to facilitate change management.

Response: This recommendation requires further evaluation. While the Department agrees that such a commission could be developed, to place added time demands on the few managers we currently have would be overwhelming when considering their existing workload requirements. This same small group of managers is already in charge of realizing the numerous other objectives contained in the audit report. If Assistant Division Managers are allocated, this recommendation will be further evaluated and reported on at a future date currently anticipated to be January 2002.

<u>**RECOMMENDATION H-2:**</u>

The RR/CC director should conduct semiannual town hall meetings.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation. Such meetings would complement the existing weekly meetings with mid level supervisors and upper level management currently held on Monday mornings that are led by the Department Head and provide a forum for information sharing. The semiannual Town Hall meetings will be held by each Assistant Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (ARRs) for staff of their individual Bureaus to provide a "State of the Bureau" report. ARRs will incorporate this goal into their individual MAPP plans beginning with MAPP plan of October 2001.

Finding I – Information Technology Management

Page 105
The State of Information Technology Management in RR/CC
<u>**Overall Observations**</u>

The audit lists a number of I/T system projects and organization events starting in 1999. This is only a partial list as three key projects were omitted and two key projects are only briefly referenced. There is an overall generalizing of projects and events. The audit's omission understates the degree of technology and organizational change the Department experienced in 1999-2000.

The five omitted technology defining projects launched in January 1999 were:

(1) Installation of a new fiber optic 1,200 node digital communications infrastructure.
(2) A new data center initially containing 12 MS-NT network servers and .75TB of RAID data storage, DLT automated backup device/software, multiple NT domains.
(3) Recruited an entirely new staff of 18 CIS/IS degreed programmers.
(4) Installed a 40,000 page per day MS-NT OCR digital imaging property document recording system.
(5) Installed a new NT based Voter Information Management System (VIMS) for 375 users to manage 4 million registered voters, half a million absentee voters per major election, and 5,000 polling locations/25,000 poll workers.

Until January 1999, the Department's technology provider for data communications, systems analysis and programming was exclusively ISD/ITS. In January 1999, PC network technology replaced the major part of the RRCC's 1970s era mainframe technology permitting the launch of the major technology projects listed above. Responsibility for the performance and success off this technology was assumed by the Department's existing I/T staff of fewer than 10 DSAI/II level analysts. Previous to January 1999, the only role for Department I/T staff was user application support and interfacing with ISD/ITS for systems development and computer operations. Therefore, the staff was not in place for transitioning quickly from mainframe to network computing. In the last two years, staff recruiting and development were the priority critical success factors for sustaining the transition to network computing. Coping with inadequate

<u>Overall Observations</u> (Cont'd)

staffing levels and skill sets were key I/T management challenges of this transition. Compounding the 1999 network transition was the departure of six skilled ISD/ITS mainframe programmers with twenty plus years each of election systems experience.

The new projects listed above radically changed the role of the Department's IT management and set in motion structural changes that are still in progress. 2001 is only the third year of transition from IBM mainframe applications to Department supported and maintained PC network technology. The Department is now responsible for 32 servers, two terabytes of RAID, multiple domains, a large communications infrastructure, a four million page per year digital imaging system, a large, interactive Internet presence and a demanding I/T project schedule of innovative systems changes implemented in support of elections and recorder functions.

The perceptions and conclusions of the audit are greatly affected by the omission and/or non-recognition of the major scope of these major projects and structural impact.

All of these projects were successfully implemented in 1999 and 2000 and did utilize a structured systems development methodology of phases, timed tasks and pre-production system testing scripts. Therefore, it is unclear how the audit concludes structured project management activities were (1) not conducted and (2) I/T management is deficient for recognizing the need for, but not completing development of, a formal systems development methodology document.

A more descriptive view of Department technology change management capability is represented by the following table:

RRCC Technology Change Management

	January 1999 - **FROM**	December 2000 **TO**
Platform:	IBM–Mainframe/Downey 700 IBM CRT's	MSNT, 23 Servers/Norwalk 1,200 PCs installed.
(Comm.)	Remote IBM controllers. **No responsibility**.	A fiber optic 2,000 node spine. **Full responsibility**.
Systems:		
Recorder	Microfilm 40K docs./day.	Image 40K docs/day w/ OCR
Registrar	Menu driven data entry, User support responsibility. A paper driven system.	Icon navigation, OCR, no paper. GUI screens, digital images, Pgming/data base responsibility.
Email	IBM mainframe.	MS Outlook.
Office Sys.	None **Limited responsibility**.	Supporting 250+ MS Ofc. users **Full responsibility**.
Tech Staff:		
	ITS/ISD Prog. Analysts **Limited authority.**	18 new CIS degreed progmrs. **Full responsibility** for initiating /delivering systems & service.

Overall Observations (Cont'd)

Perhaps one reason for the perception of the audit was the sequence of first interviewing lower level I/T staff. This approach provided a mere snapshot view of events that may have been taken out of context and led to inaccurate conclusions. Interviewing the top two levels of I/T management was conducted late in the audit and did not constitute an in-depth process, resulting in key omissions as cited above.

Page 107
Mitigating Risk

In this section, we will discuss some of the tools and methods used to mitigate IT risk:

❑ IT Planning
❑ Methods
❑ Control systems

During the 1999-2000 time period, I/T development was driven more by impending immutable deadlines rather than a formal redesign approach. Specifically, the major change to a new NT voter information management system (VIMS) was dictated by the Y2K timetable. This was a result of recognition in 1997 that replacing the previous generation ISD/ITS mainframe, 1970s era COBAL voter management system would be much better than spending the $2 million to reprogram the COBAL code system. A formal RFP and system design process developed an extensive list of business rules that resulted in procurement of a modern, NT system with far greater functional capabilities than the previous system. Additionally, and significantly, since becoming operational in 1999, the VIMS system is now saving $1.8 million per year in system maintenance costs than the former system.

Similarly, installing Microsoft Outlook was a necessity due to ITS/ISD terminating mainframe email during this same time period. The new data center and digital communications network were necessities for supporting both the new NT Voter Information Management and Property Documents Imaging Systems. The crunched timelines were dictated by these external events.

The Keyfile document imaging technology and OCR/Forms software system selected for the Recorder was previously successfully implemented in the RRCC for imaging birth, death and marriage documents in 1997. Using the same software for property document imaging in 1999 was a natural extension of this success. Problems resulted from differences in the applications, Vitals Vs Property, which were underestimated on this application of the imaging process. When determination of this vendor was made in 1995-96, alternate vendor-provided imaging systems were not operating in large jurisdictions and those in smaller jurisdictions were rudimentary as digital imaging was still working it's way into established vendor systems as a new technology. For example, in 1995 we observed San Bernardino County using one screen/keyboard to display the image and a second screen/keyboard to key the index information into a separate system. They reported the process was slower than the previous paper/microfilm system and now, five years later, they just completed an RFB and vendor selection process to completely replace their original vendor imaging system that was deficient when installed.

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Overall Observations (Cont'd)

There was an explicit decision to only reengineer the microfilming operation in order to control the scope of change imposed on a large union represented staff performing high volume essential public services for property documents. Within the past year, visits to Riverside, Alameda and Orange counties has not identified a significantly superior or materially more efficient system than the one we installed that, since early 2000, has been performing the examine, cashier and index functions of property document recording without backlogs.

Page 108 - 109
System Development Methodology or SDM

All of the projects successfully implemented in 1999 and 2000 utilized a structured systems development approach of phases, timed tasks and pre-production system testing. Therefore, the audit erroneously concludes structured project management activities were not conducted.

Strategica criticized the lack of a Systems Development Methodology (SDM). However, when asked to provide the RRCC with an example document, they could not. Instead, Strategica directed us to the County's Auditor-Controller (A-C) and the CIO. When we followed up, we learned that neither the A-C nor the CIO possesses a SDM document and these Departments did not recommend a source for obtaining a SDM.

Since the audit, Department I/T management has searched the internet, queried Gartner Information Services and found several SDMs in the public and private sectors. Differences among them are substantial. A 125 page full-featured WEB enabled SDM from a state government has been obtained in source file format with all internal addressing linkages. Conference calls with the agency were conducted last month to obtain useful information on the development of this SDM (we were told it was a long and expensive process), implementation issues and the results of using the SDM. The RRCC is now adapting this SDM to County terminology for systems and personnel job descriptions. The state agency did not charge us for the SDM and we plan to share it with the CIO for possible use as a model for other County Departments.

Page 111
Personnel & Recruiting

Recognizing the 1997 I/T job market conditions, salary constraints of the DSAI ordnance item (with outdated job specifications describing mainframe skills when NT is now the technical environment), the ARR-I/T initiated college recruiting in 1997 in anticipation of I/T projects moving the RRCC from mainframe to network computing. All recruiting activities were conducted by the ARR I/T and I/T Division Managers. Campus selection, college placement office liaison, recruiting materials development, on-campus interviews, resume review, second interviews/tours in Norwalk, relationship development prior to graduation, posting of DSAI bulletins and coordination of candidate application filing with Personnel were all performed by Department I/T.

Personnel & Recruiting (Cont'd)

Recruiting interviews were conducted on three campuses; UC Irvine, CS Polytechnic Pomona and UC Fullerton. Scheduled full day interviews with 10 - 12 candidates were conducted on campus in the Fall, Winter and Spring. Each campus recruiting cycle generated 40-60 resumes and 15-20 candidates. A total of 18 highly qualified CIS/CS graduates were subsequently hired and have proven to be productive in the Department's NT systems environment. I/T achievements were facilitated with this staff. The audit does not reflect this strategic recruiting process that has reaped significant results after the initial challenge of integrating, in a 24 month period, a completely new technical staff of 18 programmers into the Department's IT area.

Page 112
Organizational Impacts

The audit draws broad conclusions based on the perception of single events and a limited overview of the Department's short two year I/T revolution. I/T management has compiled an extraordinary track record of success over the last two years. The audit does acknowledge this achievement and also states that more formalized organizational structuring elements are now being implemented. It is difficult to reconcile the audit's critical assessment of I/T management's 'capacity/capability' in relation to the audit's acknowledgement of I/T management achievement.

RECOMMENDATION I-1:

Improve IT Planning

Response: Agree. Completed. The Department I/T mission statement in the 2001 – 2002 Business Automation Plan (BAP) reflects these recommendations. The BAP has been distributed to all I/T staff and is now used as a working, management document. Two remaining large-scale projects, Vital Records documents and Property Recording documents, will be reengineered systems.

RECOMMENDATION I-2:

Create a position for and appoint or recruit a Chief Information Officer

Response: Agree. Completed. During the time that the audit was occurring, the Department received approval (in the 2000/2001 budget) to expand from three to five Assistant Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk top management positions (ARRs). In recognition of the expanded responsibilities of the Department's I/T environment due to transitioning from the County's IBM mainframe to a Departmental NT network computing environment, the ARR for I/T responsibilities was separated from the combination of dual ARR I/T and line operation responsibility. Previously this ARR was responsible for Departmental I/T management AND two major Departmental line operations, recruiting Polls and Officers and Warehouse Operations for assembly and delivery of all election supplies for 5,000 voting precincts.

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RECOMMENDATION I-2: (Cont'd)

As a result, at the end of November 2000 (right after the audit was released) the ARR for I/T was appointed the ARR/CIO in recognition of the importance of the technical management responsibility for all elections, recorder and county clerk operations. At that same time, a fourth ARR was hired for Election Operations encompassing Polls and Officers, Warehouse Election Supplies management and Election Information/Candidate Filing. The fifth and final ARR to join the Department's top management team, for all Recorder/County Clerk line functions, was hired on April 9, 2001.

RECOMMENDATION I-3:

Increase the capacity of Technology Services to provide an adequate level of support for the Department

Response: The audit lists a number of I/T system projects and organization events starting in 1999. This is only a partial list as three key projects were omitted and two key projects are only briefly referenced. There is an overall generalizing of projects and events. The audit's omission understates the degree of technology and organizational change the Department experienced in 1999-2000.

The audit draws broad conclusions based on the perception of single events and a limited overview of the Department's short two year I/T revolution. I/T management has compiled an extraordinary track record of success over the last two years. The audit does acknowledge this achievement and also states that more formalized organizational structuring elements are now being implemented. It is difficult to reconcile the audit's critical assessment of I/T management's 'capacity/capability' in relation to the audit's acknowledgement of I/T management achievement. The same generalizing precludes the audit from seeing the growth of I/T capacity resulting from the integration of an all new programming staff in the systems development capacity of the Department.

❑ **Recommendation: Decrease the need for in-house professionals, freeing Technical Services staff to concentrate on support of vertical (specialized) business applications and implementation of systems important to the strategic plan.**

❑ **Purchase off-the-shelf software that has already been developed and tested whenever possible.**

Response: Current plans call for implementing established, vendor-developed and maintained Vote Tally, Ballot Layout, Vital Records and Property Document systems. Quick Books and related vendor accounting software is scheduled for evaluation this FY. A vendor provided networked inventory system was installed in 2000 to record and track the acquisition of all equipment.

RECOMMENDATION I-3: (Cont'd)

❏ **Use selective outsourcing. Commodity products and items such as help desks, PC and network support are successfully outsourced by many government agencies.**

Response: Agree. The Department has utilized this solution for GIS and special projects.

❏ **Use ad-hoc personnel outsourcing. Use supplemental staff to provide specialized skills or handle peak workloads.**

Response: Agree. Department I/T uses vendor provided skill sets for periodic server upgrades, RAID additions to the SAN, software upgrades and implementations in Recorder and GIS software and hardware.

❏ **Application Service Providers (ASPs) charge a per-transaction or per-subscriber fee for access to software, alleviating the burden of developing, implementing and maintaining software packages in-house. ASPs such as Ezgov.com, Tidemark, NIC, Carta, or PeopleSoft could be used currently to provide administrative applications (e.g., financial or human resources) and other vertical applications as this market expands.**

Response: Agree. The Department is participating in the CAO-CIO ERP project and believes packaged financial software will be an effective solution. Quick Books and related vendor accounting software is scheduled for evaluation this FY. A vendor provided networked inventory system was installed in 2000 to record and track the acquisition of all equipment.

❏ **Recommendation: Employ additional strategies to recruit and retain experienced IT professionals.**

Response: Recognizing the 1997 I/T job market conditions, salary constraints of the DSAI ordinance item (with outdated job specifications describing mainframe skills when NT is now the technical environment), the ARR-I/T initiated college recruiting in 1997 in anticipation of I/T projects moving the RRCC from mainframe to network computing. All recruiting activities were conducted by the ARR I/T and I/T Division Managers. Campus selection, college placement office liaison, recruiting materials development, on-campus interviews, resume review, second interviews/tours in Norwalk, relationship development prior to graduation, posting of DSAI bulletins and coordination of candidate application filing with Personnel were all performed by Department I/T. Recruiting interviews were conducted on three campuses; UC Irvine, CS Polytechnic Pomona and UC Fullerton. Scheduled full day interviews with 10 - 12 candidates were conducted on campus in the Fall, Winter and Spring. Each campus recruiting cycle generated 40-60 resumes and 15-20 candidates. A total of 18 highly qualified CIS/CS graduates were subsequently hired and have proven to be subsequently hired and have proven to be productive in the Department's NT systems

environment. I/T achievements were facilitated with this staff. The audit does not reflect this strategic recruiting process that has reaped significant results after the initial challenge of integrating, in a 24 month period, a completely new technical staff of 18 programmers into the Department's IT area.

❑ **Utilize the Technical Director position as described in the Organizational Structure chapter of this document to recruit experienced IT professionals from the private sector or promote from within.**

Response: Agree. Hampered by County wide IT job descriptions that are outdated from 1960's punch card mainframe descriptions, Department I/T is soliciting higher level I/T professionals using internet job recruiting sites.

❑ **Employ contract employees or employees from temporary agencies where appropriate to offer competitive salaries.**

Response: Agree. The Department already makes this a practice. We have hired GIS expertise, data base specialists and are open to other similar opportunities.

❑ **Offer bonuses to employees who successfully recruit IT professionals.**

Response: This is presently not allowed in the County HR structure.

❑ **Offer signing bonuses to new IT employees (Iowa, Michigan and South Carolina use bonus programs).**

Response: This is presently not allowed in the County HR structure. We agree that the County should adopt this policy as an HR standard.

❑ **Train current employees who demonstrate an IT aptitude.**

Response: Agree. We have enabled PC experienced staff (secretarial, administrative) to migrate to I/T positions. We have several examples who are now on our systems staff.

❑ **Implement more frequent salary reviews for IT staff.**

Response: Agree. Since the audit was filed, six DSAI programmer staff have been promoted to DSAII. This was the soonest possible time frame within the HR rules for promotion and it is the policy of Department I/T to promote qualified staff to the next level as expediently as possible when positions are available.

RECOMMENDATION I-3: (Cont'd)

❏ **Continue offering flexible work schedules.**

Response: Agree. We have always had flexible work schedules and have no plans to suspend our current policy.

❏ **Recommendation: Reorganize the Department, employing a functional "Business Specialist" concept. IT staff would specialize in elections or Recorder/Clerk functions. A functional concept is being recommended due to the importance of the IT staff's knowledge of the laws and procedures in their profession (elections, recorder, clerk). This was viewed as especially critical in the Registrar's office, where laws constantly change and complex, high-volume, deadline-driven processes take place. The organizational structure recommended will foster and retain this expertise among Technical Services staff.**

Response: Agree. Department I/T staff have always been organized by functional area, to support complex digital imaging in Property Recording and specialized processes in Elections Operations for example. There are no plans to change this policy and we are puzzled by the recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION I-4:

Improve Procurement Processes

Acquire and implement a system development methodology; require compliance for all projects, including those developed by vendors or outsourced. As mentioned in the Chapter, the RR/CC need not adhere strictly to every element of an SDM but can "cherry pick" as the size and complexity of the system dictate.

Response: Strategica criticized the lack of a Systems Development Methodology (SDM). However, when asked to provide the RRCC with an example document, they could not. Instead, Strategica directed us to the County's Auditor-Controller (A-C) and the CIO. When we followed up, we learned that neither the A-C nor the CIO possesses a SDM document and these Departments did not recommend a source for obtaining a SDM. Since the audit, Department I/T management has searched the Internet, queried Gartner Information Services and found several SDMs in the public and private sectors. Differences among them are substantial. A 125 page full-featured WEB enabled SDM from a state government has been obtained in source file format with all internal addressing linkages. Conference calls with the agency were conducted last month to obtain useful information on the development of this SDM (we were told it was a long and expensive process), implementation issues and the results of using the SDM. The RRCC is now adapting this SDM to County terminology for systems and personnel job descriptions. The state agency did not charge us for the SDM and we plan to share it with the CIO for possible use as a model for other County Departments.

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RECOMMENDATION I-4: (Cont'd)

❑ **Recommendation: Expand the use of competitive bidding. There are many "off-the-shelf" applications that have already been developed by software companies specializing in vertical markets; their products and services should be explored in a competitive bidding environment prior to replacement or enhancement of current applications.**

Response: Agree. The Department is participating in the CAO-CIO ERP project and believes packaged financial software will be an effective solution. Quick Books and related vendor accounting software is scheduled for evaluation this FY. A vendor provided NT inventory system was installed in 2000 to record and track the acquisition of all equipment by the Finance and Management Section.

❑ **Recommendation: Use independent consultants to facilitate developing project work scopes, specifications, RFPs and acceptance tests where appropriate (include costs in the project budget). This will ensure future technologies and best practices are incorporated into the project, eliminate conflicts of interests, and address the shortage of IT staffing.**

Response: Agree. We are now working with ITS-ISD and their identified specialized vendors for developing RFP system specifications.

❑ **Recommendation: Recruit a "third-party" contract manager to review proposed contracts, ensure existing contracts are managed in an efficient manner and all provisions are met by vendors. The contract manager should report to either the Auditor-Controller or CAO to ensure proper checks and balances are maintained.**

Response: The Department believes the A/C and CIO should determine if this is an appropriate approach and develop a county standard if it is determined to be appropriate.

❑ **Recommendation: A cost/benefit analysis should be applied to areas such as scanning equipment technical support; it may be less expensive to purchase new scanners than pay annual maintenance fees while at the same time reducing downtime.**

Response: The Department performs CB analysis on all equipment maintenance. Scanning equipment with mechanical and electronic components which are highly dependant on synchronized movement to process 40,000 pages per day requires weekly service calls and experience frequent replacement of expensive components priced in the thousands of dollars. The Department applies value judgement criteria to maintenance decisions. PCs are not on maintenance, they are promptly and cheaply serviced and repaired by college temporary technicians. RAID disk drives have been removed from maintenance for a savings of $48,000 per year. The drives are $1,200 each and fail at the rate of 1.5 year and are replaced by in-house staff.

RECOMMENDATION I-5:

Increase and Prioritize IT Training

Training should be funded and prioritized to match training programs with strategic goals. A training plan should be developed on an annual basis that will ensure appropriate RR/CC staff to acquire the necessary skills based on a guiding plan rather than on a first-come, first-served basis.

Response: The goal of the RRCC is to develop an economical in-house training program for Windows, Word and Excel skills for the intermediate and supervising clerks selected by section heads and division managers and authorized by signature for training by the Assistant RRCC. The planning horizon for this group is three months and is dependant on staffing changes resulting from new hires, resignations and changes of responsibilities. An average of four staff per month requested to attend training from this group. Training of technical staff has been based on functional assignment; Visual Basic and SQL database training for staff developing information systems, NT-Server training for staff supporting network services. This training occurs within the first six months of hiring a new programmer and depends greatly on prior experience and the skill sets of the new hire. This structure does not conform to an annual training program.

RECOMMENDATION I-6:

Perform an Information Technology Audit in January 2003

Response: Agree. The Department welcomes the opportunity to demonstrate a superior I/T operation in 2003. Audit criteria from the AC is requested as soon as possible.

RECOMMENDATION J-1:

The RR/CC should ensure that full recovery of the imaging database is possible and develop a schedule for performing full backups.

Response: Full backup and full recovery of the imaged document database has been a standard procedure for the RR/CC. This recommendation resulted from an observation of recurring transient technical problems executing the backup software system. A new backup software system has been acquired (Veritas Inc.) as well as a new Intel server and DLT six-head streaming tape drive to perform backups more reliably.

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RECOMMENDATION J-2:

Clarify procedures for green stripe envelopes.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation. ARR/CCs for Election Services and Election Preparation will work together to improve the processing of green stripe election envelopes. Completion will occur by October 2001 for institution with the November 2001 UDEL Election.

RECOMMENDATION J-3:

Restrict public access to areas handling negotiable documents and payments.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation and will develop written procedures for annual reviews by the Recorder's Office. Financial Services Section will conduct internal audit-checks for fiscal compliance three times per year. Completion is anticipated by March 2002.

RECOMMENDATION K-1:

Ensure that Division Managers submit monthly overtime requests.

Response: Completed. The Department agrees with this recommendation. Internal automation enhancements in the Finance & Management area have already been implemented. Further enhancements such as the feasibility of electronic submission of Bureau overtime requests from Division Managers to Financial Services will be pursued with Technical Services. This recommendation is complete.

RECOMMENDATION K-2:

Augment the County HR recruitment efforts.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation and this is in progress and ongoing. Currently, efforts include onsite campus recruitment by Department IT Management. Prior to this report, Human Resources Management had direct interface with IT personnel regarding conjoint and enhanced recruitment efforts. The process currently being developed is to ensure that recruitment efforts by IT managers are complemented by Human Resource staff. Solicitations and advertisement in major publications and trade journals will also be used to expand the Department's recruitment effort for IT positions as well as for other targeted classifications. There will also be expanded interfacing with local school districts that currently have programs in place that prepare students for clerical positions. The intent will be to apprise students of career opportunities available with the RR/CC and invite them to apply and compete for those positions.

RECOMMENDATION K-3:

Continue to conduct exams and recruit for temporary employees as needed to maintain a list of eligible recurrent workers.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation and this is in progress and is ongoing. We have maintained a list of temporary workers for many years, and recruited even more heavily prior to the anticipated employee labor strike last year. We were very successful in bringing in the needed temporary workers. Last Fall, we added computers for applicants to take typing tests required for some positions and realized a much better qualification rate. The Department began recruiting for recurrent workers to replace election temporary workers last summer, and has been gradually replacing the election temporary workers with recurrent employees. The Department is currently in the process of developing a register of recurrent clerks, and has focused on the requirement to move from usage of Clerk, NCs to Clerk, Recurrents in order to keep the clerks on board for longer periods of time and to realize a higher caliber of clerical staffing. Completion will be December 2001.

RECOMMENDATION K-4:

Negotiate and maintain a multi-year contract for temporary staffing.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation. We have most recently piggy-backed on another department's service contract and are in the process of developing our own contract. We are currently analyzing our contractual temporary clerical needs (in relationship to the NC and Recurrent personnel we hire). The anticipated timeframe for the development of a contract for temporary clerical help is January 2002.

RECOMMENDATION K-5:

Continue efforts to develop a single, accurate item control report.

Response: Completed. The Department agrees with this recommendation. Department I/T staff, in collaboration with Human Resources Department staff, developed a new, user-friendly Item Control report early this year. This recommendation is complete.

RECOMMENDATION K-6:

Clearly articulate the criteria for selection of Division Manager candidates.

Response: Completed. The Department agrees with this recommendation and has made enhancements to the selection process. For example, all selection criteria will be made in concert with the County Department of Human Resources' staff. The process involves viable vocational and examination plans which are discussed with the

RECOMMENDATION K-6: (Cont'd)

appropriate Assistant Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk prior to posting of the bulletin for these examinations. This recommendation is complete.

RECOMMENDATION K-7:

Provide opportunities for employees to develop skills.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation and it is in progress and ongoing. Prior to the inception of the current Department of Human Resources' development of a Training Academy, this Department maintained it's own mini-academy for providing training to temporary clerical staff to prepare them for permanent position examinations. The Department will continue to conduct in-house training for staff, which will be complemented by centralized DHR training. The Department will continue to encourage all employees to also seek their own means of upgrading career enhancement skills. The Department also proposes to implement semiannual intradepartmental seminars by October 2001, on development of career enhancement skills and providing educational planning. Additionally, as a result of the management audit, the Department proposes to add a much needed Assistant Division Manager classification which will provide a career ladder between the Section Head and Division Manager levels. If these new positions are approved, the planned seminars will address these new positions as part of the development of a career ladder. A status report on the development of a career ladder (and succession planning) will be prepared semiannually beginning in January 2002.

RECOMMENDATION K-8:

Review all agency-specific classifications.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation and this is in progress and is ongoing. The Department is now reviewing all Department-specific classifications in response to the County Department of Human Resources' requirement to review classifications at least every five years. The Department's Human Resources Division will prepare a timetable to ensure that the necessary reviews are completed within the timeframes established by the County Department of Human Resources. That timetable will be developed by October 2001.

RECOMMENDATION K-9:

Complete performance evaluations in a timely manner.

Response: Completed. The Department is current in compliance with yearly performance evaluations and these are also part of the Management Appraisal Plan requirements. Supervisors are trained to reinforce the objective of timely compliance and MAPP managers are rated in part based on the completion of yearly performance evaluations for all their staff. This recommendation is complete.

RECOMMENDATION K-10:

Develop a succession plan for key management positions.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation and will, in conjunction with support from DHR, develop a succession plan for management positions. Included will be the systematic review of hire dates for its key management and supervisory staff (target date October 2001) and, based on assumptions regarding anticipated retirement dates, develop a plan for in-service training of existing Department staff or hiring-in new personnel to ensure that critical functions are continuously covered. To the extent possible, the proposed in-house training will be complemented by DHR training/development programs. The target date for the development of in-house training (in conjunction with DHR) is December 2001. The Department intends to implement a mentor-type program beginning in April 2002. There must be the appropriate management infrastructure in place to help achieve the main Department mission (e.g. the Assistant Division Manager position classification must be approved to focus on mentoring and succession planning).

RECOMMENDATION L-1:

The RR/CC should require all Assistant RR/CCs to prepare annual plans and submit annual budgets in a timely manner.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation. With the recent hirings of two Assistant Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk for the Recorder/Clerk and Election Services Bureaus, and the impending recruitment of a Chief Deputy, the Department will no longer be stretched so thin that only the most critical operations are managed optimally. By the end of calendar year 2001, the Department's executive management team will be fully in place allowing this recommendation to be implemented in conjunction with development of the FY 2002-03 budget that takes place in February 2002.

RECOMMENDATION L-2:

Once all divisions provide budgets as part of the budget cycle, the Department should provide each division with quarterly budget summaries.

Response: Completed. The Department agrees with this recommendation and implemented the first of a series of budget update meetings for all MAPP managers in the Department in March 2001.

RECOMMENDATION L-3:

The RR/CC should ensure that the costs of technological election systems or solutions used by the County in elections are charged to participating jurisdictions.

Response: Completed. The Department agrees with this recommendation as it relates to IT costs associated with elections by fully charging base-year costs to participating jurisdictions. This had always been the previous practice, with the audit year (2000) as the only deviation resulting from finalizing the transition from one voter information management system to a new one. In the future, the Department will pass-on to participating jurisdictions all related IT costs regardless of system changes. This was completed in March 2001.

With respect to the recommendation that jurisdictions participating in County elections be assessed their fair share of costs associated with the use of any new technology, even when the system is under "pilot" status such as the recent electronic Touchscreen Voting Project, the Department will explore the feasibility of implementing such a recommendation. We consider this recommendation complete.

RECOMMENDATION L-4:

Periodically review fee levels.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation. Although fee studies have always been ongoing, the number of fees re-evaluated each year could be greatly increased if administrative staffing were increased to conduct the studies. The Department has requested two new budgeted positions for FY 2001-2002. Completion of this recommendation is incumbent on the CAO, DHR and the Boards' approval of the new positions. As is noted, however, some Department fees cannot be increased as they are set by State statue.

RECOMMENDATION L-5:

Implement additional services on a cost-recovery basis.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation and will conduct a feasibility assessment by June 2002.

ELECTION TRANSACTION REVIEW AUDIT
(Submitted January 18, 2001)

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Complete the testing, modification and rollout of the ICR function for registering new voters.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation. ICR is nascent technology and still under development industry-wide. Further enhancement will be necessary before the Department can reap the time/labor savings that would assist in speeding up voter registration data entry. An ICR function status update will be done by November 2002.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Explore the feasibility of using the sample ballot mailing house for the initial Absentee (AV) ballot mailing; use first-class postage for subsequent AV ballot mailings.

Response: The Department agrees with, and in fact suggested this recommendation to the audit team. We are exploring the feasibility of implementing this recommendation on a pilot basis for the November 2001 UDEL Election. Assessment of feasibility will be reported by January 2002.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Use monitors and spot-checking at USPS facilities.

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation and will initiate such monitorings beginning with the November 2001 UDEL Election.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Implement process changes to facilitate more efficient, large scale absentee voting (pilot use of electronic signature verification).

Response: The Department agrees with this recommendation. However, to date NO election jurisdiction in the U.S. has the capability of deploying electronic signature verification to replace human intervention in reviewing/verifying/accepting every absentee voter/petition signature. We are exploring the feasibility of employing this technology that is currently only used in banking applications. However, the software costs are very high and no election company is currently marketing this technology. We hope to be the first one after a successful test can be achieved using our database. This is not anticipated in time for the 2002 elections. Review of feasibility will be conducted prior to the November 2003 election.

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